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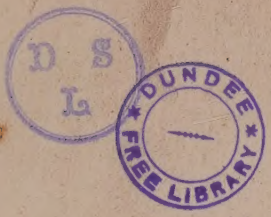

MARIE ANTOINETTE

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MARIE ANTOINETTE.

FROM THE PICTURE IN THE JONES COLLECTION IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

BY

CLARA TSCHUDI

Authorised Translation from the Norwegian

BY

E. M. COPE

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE translation of this "Life of Marie Antoinette" has been a work of love and deep interest, and I cannot send it forth into the world without a few words of comment on the gifted authoress, Clara Tschudi, whose writings deserve to be known and appreciated in England.

She is a strong, but genuinely womanly character—a distinct personality—with great charm of manner and power of language; of Swiss descent, but born in Tönsberg, the oldest town in Norway, in the neighbourhood of which, Vallö, she is living with her father, and preparing a fresh work of historical interest, for which the details were collected in France and Italy during the winter of '96–97.

The present monograph, and that of the *Empress Eugénie*, have been translated into German and Italian, and have met with marked success among readers of all classes.

In addition to a diploma of merit, "Litteris et Artibus," with which Clara Tschudi alone, among Swedish and Norwegian authoresses, has been honoured, she has just

received a gold medal from Oscar II., in recognition of her valuable historical researches.

Professor Kirkpatrick, of Edinburgh University, a lover of Norway and its literature, writes me as follows:

"I am glad to hear that you have translated Fröken Clara Tschudi's *Marie Antoinette.* Her *Eugénie*, which I read with great interest and reviewed favourably some years ago, seemed to me at the time well worthy of being translated into English; but her *Marie Antoinette*, which I have only dipped into as yet, is evidently a much more important work, and one of more enduring historical value. Her easy and pleasant style ought of itself to ensure her works a wide circulation.

"Permit me to express my hearty wishes for the success of your translation.—J. K."

E. M. COPE.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Few women have excited greater interest than the unfortunate daughter of the imperial house of Austria, who, when only a child of fifteen, was taken from her native land to occupy such an important post in the corrupt court of France. Her life has therefore been already frequently described in different ways, and under many aspects.

Although it is apparently a subject which is soon exhausted, Marie Antoinette ever remains of fascinating interest; she is one of those historical women who again and again attract our attention.

Her life falls into two sharply defined portions: twenty years of triumph, which cost her five years of martyrdom.

In the first we see her thoughtless and careless—in the last we find her in adversity and distress, when Providence is teaching her cruel lessons as a punishment for her former frivolity.

If she is far from blameless in her youth, she develops on the other hand, in the days of her misfortune, a greatness of soul becoming in her as a queen, and as the child of Maria Theresa.

I do not in any way presume to offer my work as a portion of the history of France; I touch on political

events only when it is necessary in order to explain the course of my narrative. I have wished to depict in broad outlines a portion of a human life full of vicissitudes, smiles, and tears. The scattered accounts which I have endeavoured to collect into one picture will, I hope, cast, if not a perfectly new, yet a richer light on the queen about whom there are still so many conflicting opinions. All biography is full of instruction, and I believe that my readers will find subject for reflection in my description of her life.

The most important of the works I have consulted during my studies are :—

Mémoires de Madame de Campan.
Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirch.
Mémoires du Baron de Besenval.
Mémoires de Lauzun.
Mémoires de Soulavie.
Mémoires de Weber.
Mémoires inédits de Madame la Duchesse de Tourzel.
Maria Theresa et Marie Antoinette.
Histoire de Madame du Barry.
Portefeuille d'un talon rouge.
Mémoires du Prince de Ligne.
Mémoires sur la vie de la Duchesse de Polignac.
Madame de Lamballe, d'après des documents inédits, par Georges Bertin.
Souvenirs et portraits, par le Duc de Lévis.
Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France.
Souvenirs d'un page.
Mesdames de France, par Barthélémy.
Souvenirs d'émigration, par la Marquise de Lâge.
Mémoires du Marquis de Ferrières.
Relations inédites de la Prise de la Bastille.
Mémoires sur la vie et le caractère de Madame la Duchesse de Polignac, par la Comtesse Diane de Polignac.

Correspondance littéraire de Grimm.
Mémorial de gouverneur Morris.
Mémoires du Comte Valentin Esterhazy.
Louis XVI., par le Comte de Falloux.
Marie Antoinette, Joseph II., und Leopold II.
Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck.
Mémoires et correspondance de Mallet du Pau.
Correspondance diplomatique du Baron de Staël-Holstein.
Révolutions de Paris.
E. Quinet: *La Révolution.*
Dauban: *Etude sur Madame Roland et sur son temps.*
Madame Elisabeth, par la Comtesse d'Armaillé.
Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth.
Lescure: *Marie Antoinette et sa famille.*
Lescure: *La vraie Marie Antoinette.*
Viel Castel: *Marie Antoinette et la Révolution.*
Feuillet de Conches: *Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, et Madame Elisabeth.*
Pitaval: *Marie Antoinette; la Reine de France décapitée.*
Mémoires de Dumouriez.
Mémoires de Bertrand de Molleville.
Souvenirs de Madame Vigée Lebrun.
Journal d'un prêtre parisien.
Dernières Années du règne de Louis XVI., par Hue.
Journal de Cléry.
Souvenirs et notes fidèles, par Lepître.
Six journées passées au Temple, par Moëlle.
Fragments historiques sur le Temple, par Turgy.
Emile Campardon: *Marie Antoinette à la Conciergerie.*
Notes sur le procès de Marie Antoinette, par Chauveau-Lagarde.
Madame Simon-Viennot: *Marie Antoinette devant le XIX.ième siècle.*
Chantelauze: *Louis XVII., son enfance, sa prison et sa mort au Temple, d'après des documents inédits des "Archives Nationales."*
Beauchesne: *Louis XVII., sa vie, son agonie, sa mort*, etc., etc.

Side by side with these I have, of course, studied the different histories of Marie Antoinette and her time, which are published in France; and I especially name the brothers Goncourt, whose beautiful and sympathetic sketches have more than once provided me with counsel and guidance in my work. The correspondence of the period has also been a considerable source of information for me.

From the private letters, which for a series of years were exchanged between Maria Theresa and Comte Mercy-Argenteau, a correspondence which was carried on so cautiously that the knowledge of it was not openly known till a hundred years afterwards, many of the events connected with the youth of Marie Antoinette have been extracted which give the key to more than one of her actions, and help us to find the suffering woman beneath the Queen of France.

CLARA TSCHUDI.

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MARIE ANTOINETTE

Part I.

Marie Antoinette's Youth.

"Vérité, rien que vérité, toute la vérité."

CHAPTER I.

Birth of the Archduchess Maria Antonia—Her Education—The future Queen of France leaves her home.

Six months before the beginning of the Seven Years' War, on November 2nd, 1755, the south of Europe was shaken by a terrible earthquake, and Lisbon was destroyed. Thirty thousand persons perished, and the King and Queen of Portugal had to flee from their palace, which became a heap of ruins.

This was All Souls' Day, the birthday of Marie Antoinette.

Her parents were Francis Stephan of Tuscany and Maria Theresa of Austria, and she was christened Maria Antonia Josephine Johanna.

Even before her birth a wager had been laid on the little one.

The Empress, who had already five daughters, but at that time only two sons, wished for a third.

"Will it be a son or a daughter?" she asked at an evening reception in Schönbrunn during the summer of 1755.

"A son, certainly," said one of the courtiers present.

"You think so," replied Maria Theresa, "but I bet you two ducats it will be a girl."

The courtier lost the bet, brought the ducats wrapped in paper, and presented them kneeling to his sovereign.

On the paper were written the following lines, composed for the occasion by Metastasio:—

"Ho perduto: 'l augusta figlia,
A pagar m' ha condamnato;
Ma s' e vero ch' a voi simiglia,
Tutto l' mundo ha guadagnato."

("I've lost: the baby proves a maid,
And so the money must be paid;
But as she's said to be like thee,
The world has gained instead of me.")

Life in the court of Maria Theresa was very simple, almost homely. Not that etiquette was entirely banished from Burg and Schönbrunn, but it played no great part in either home.

On the other hand, although the etiquette at court was so slight, family life also held no prominent place in Marie Antoinette's home.

The Queen of France often spoke with delight of her childhood; but it always strikes one that her father, the Emperor, stood far nearer to the heart of the girl than her mother.

Accustomed as she was to command, the Empress understood the art of inspiring respect in her own family, and fear restrained the affection of her children, who never forgot, in their intercourse with her, that they were in the presence of a sovereign.

Politics and the cares of government allowed Maria Theresa but little time to devote to her children.

It was the duty of the court physician to visit them every morning, and then to go at once from their apartments to the Empress, who enquired most precisely about the well-being of her little flock; but she herself rarely saw them more than once a week.

Their education was entrusted to tutors and governesses, whom the mother selected with great care, and for whom she in a great measure traced the course of instruction to be followed, though she did not watch very closely that her plans were carried out. Those teachers who felt safe from motherly supervision were often far too indulgent towards the imperial children, and Marie Antoinette's governess was dismissed because Maria Theresa accidentally discovered that some specimens of writing,

said to have been done by her daughter, were the work of her teacher.

Countess Brandeisen, who came in her place, loved her pupil and gained her affection, but she also spoilt her; and if she tried to be severe and to reprove her favourite, a loving reply or a caress was sufficient to make the Countess as gentle and lenient as ever.

Marie Antoinette remained in her charge until her twelfth year, and she considered it quite a misfortune that she had come into her hands so late, and so soon had had to lose her.

Countess Lerchenfeld, who succeeded, was a stronger character, and much more severe. But she suffered from both bad health and bad temper, and was in no way suited to guide the lively, joyous little girl.

Metastasio gave her lessons in Italian, and taught her to speak the language with grace and fluency; she also translated difficult Italian books without effort.

Gluck was her music master, and she retained her liking for his style through life.

In other branches too she had the best instructors, but she made no progress in anything, except Italian and music; and her mother complains in her letters that her youngest daughter does not profit from the instruction of her teachers.

The Archduchess Antonia, as she was called in Vienna, always spelt incorrectly, and her handwriting was almost illegible. Her drawings had to be improved before they could be shown to her mother, and in geography she was more ignorant than many a peasant child. Not only general history, but that of her own family was almost unknown to her.

She was not wanting in ability, but she had no wish to learn; and her ignorance, which could not remain unnoticed, caused many persons in France to have a very poor opinion of her understanding. But though she was so very deficient in knowledge, she had, on the contrary, great facility for adapting herself to the manners of society, and even as a child she astonished people by her pretty self-assurance, while she gained all hearts by her grace and friendliness.

Both the Emperor and the Empress were fond of music, and as often as they could they spent their evenings in the large

music room at Schönbrunn. Pianos and harps were ranged along the walls, and Gluck or Haydn played, or Metastasio read aloud, when the imperial children were frequently allowed to be present.

It was on such an evening that Mozart made his entrance into the great world.

Unaccustomed to the highly-polished floor, and dazzled by the lights, he fell, as he was advancing to bow before the Empress.

The courtiers thought him clumsy, and smiled at his misfortune; but no one went to his assistance, until the Archduchess Antonia hastened forward to raise and comfort the little man.

As we have said, the cares of state prevented Maria Theresa from occupying herself in detail about her children; but she nevertheless liked to be looked upon as an anxious mother in the eyes of the world. If travellers of distinction came to Vienna the Empress invited them to the Castle, and on these occasions she showed herself in the bosom of her family.

Then, from time to time, she liked the newspapers to insert notices about the abilities of the princes and princesses, and to know that people spoke of their goodness or cleverness.

Her loyal subjects repeated with delight any pleasing stories told of the archduchesses. For instance, when Antonia, one winter's day, gave all her savings to the poor, the news spread from mouth to mouth, and all Austria could tell of the remarkable speeches which she and her sisters had made.

It is true that they occasionally read speeches in Latin aloud, but the populace did not know that the girls understood not a word of what they were reading.

* * * * * *

For hundreds of years the reigning house of France had been obliged to defend her rights against the house of Habsburg, which, in possession of Austria, Spain, and Holland, surrounded her on three sides, and it had been the constant aim of all her kings to destroy this triple power. The people too were accustomed to consider Austria as their hereditary enemy. But by degrees the situation changed, for the conquests of Richelieu and Mazarin, the victories, as well as the defeats, of Louis XV.,

had altered the map of Europe. The house of Habsburg had been driven from Spain for ever, and at the same time a new power, the house of Hohenzollern, had arisen in Germany. Signs too were not wanting that France and Austria wished to forget their hereditary feud.

Maria Theresa's father, Charles VI., had made the first advance, and Cardinal Fleury, Prime Minister during the minority of Louis XV., did not appear unwilling to accept the proffered friendship. As for the young Empress, her hostility towards the King of Prussia made her eagerly desire the alliance; and during the war against France and Prussia she offered a separate peace to the former country, and upon this being accepted, she still continued her friendly advances.

History relates that the highly moral Maria Theresa went so far in her zeal as to write a letter to the King's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, in which she called her "dear friend."

The Empress has denied this assertion in a private letter. But that which she could not personally bring about was arranged by Count Kaunitz, her trusted counsellor.

Although for a time nothing came of these preliminary courtesies, France showed herself by no means insensible to Austria's expressions of regard; and in 1756 Louis XV. entered into the alliance with Maria Theresa, which gave rise to the Seven Years' War.

The Empress wished to retain in the future the ally she had now gained, and after peace was declared her ambitious and enterprising mind laid plans for a matrimonial union between the two royal houses.

Louis XV. and his minister Choiseul were aware of her design, and Maria Theresa selected her youngest daughter as the future Queen of France, hoping that Maria Antonia's beauty would gain more power in France than her soldiers had hitherto been able to achieve.

The union between the Austrian Archduchess and the Dauphin of France was arranged long before the engagement was announced.

When Antonia was eleven years old the brilliant Madame Geoffrin visited Vienna and was most graciously received by

the Empress, who introduced all her daughters to her, but Madame was especially struck with the beauty of the youngest.

"What a charming child," she exclaimed. "I should like to take her away."

"Take her with you," said Maria Theresa, delighted; "take her by all means."

She let Madame Geoffrin clearly understand that it would please her if she would speak of the little one in the literary salons of Paris, and say how pretty she thought her.

Madame Geoffrin fulfilled the wishes of the Empress with zeal, and in consequence the future Dauphiness and her charming manners were discussed in the capital during the following winter. Louis XV. obtained information as to her progress through his ambassador, and a renowned artist was sent to Vienna to paint her portrait. As soon as it was finished the King was so intensely anxious to see it that the artist had to send his son with it to Versailles, in order that it might be delivered as rapidly as possible.

Maria Theresa surrounded her daughter with everything that could contribute to prepare her for her new position. She had to wear her hair in the French fashion, and to study the language. A French actor was appointed to read to her, but as he was a man of bad character the choice greatly displeased the French court. The ambassador at Vienna was therefore requested to call the attention of the Empress to the reader, who was dismissed; and Maria Theresa begged that a priest might be sent to her court from France.

On the recommendation of the Bishop of Toulouse, Abbé Vermond was selected; and immediately on his arrival in Vienna he made a plan for his lessons, which was sanctioned by the Empress. He wished to instruct the Archduchess in religion, and to give her an insight into the history and literature of France, in addition to paying especial attention to the language and orthography.

But, in spite of his good intentions, the Abbé was unable to awaken in her any desire to learn, and he writes in his *Memoirs*:—

"It was quite impossible to induce the Archduchess to interest

herself in any subject, although I feel convinced that she could have done so if only she had had the will to apply herself."

Maria Antonia had not completed her tenth year when she lost her father. The Emperor was going to Innsbrück to be present at the marriage of his second son, and before he left home he desired that his daughter Antonia should come to him.

"I felt a longing to embrace that child," he said with emotion, as he held her in his arms for the last time. A few days later he fell down dead at his son's wedding banquet.

His sudden removal was a hard trial for his children, though still worse for his wife, whose previous troubles were quite cast into the shade by this unexpected blow.

But even sorrow could not long depress the energetic Empress, who seems from this time to have had Maria Antonia frequently with her.

She talked to her of the instability of thrones, and made her own shroud in the presence of the child. Then she took her down into the vault where former rulers were laid to rest. "The same honours are now paid to me that these enjoyed in their day," she said. "They are forgotten, and I shall share their fate."

Maria Theresa was too clear-sighted and two accurately informed about the life of the French court to allow herself to be dazzled by the high position which awaited her child, and could not shut her eyes to the fact that the throne which the young Princess was to occupy was undermined and tottering already. She told her daughter about her own troubled youth, the thorny path by which she had approached the throne, and all the illusions that lay buried in her memory. This strong ruler wept over her persecutions and misfortunes, but especially over the loss of Silesia. Then, quite suddenly, she would take the child into her arms and exclaim:—

"Think of me when misfortunes overtake you." At other times she would take her to visit hospitals and asylums to see the sick and orphans, and while she showed her all this misery she impressed upon her daughter that work faithfully done is the only thing that can give lasting peace and satisfaction.

Marie Antoinette could not understand her mother's seriousness, nor could she grasp the joy that inspired the Empress after the accomplishment of her duty. And the mother recalled that there had been a time when she too had longed for amusement and sought it, and that it was only through adversity that work had become dearer to her than anything else.

Her daughter's thoughtless levity caused her no anger, possibly she did not even notice it till it was too late. She could not help being drawn towards this bright, lively child, whose faults were concealed by so much grace.

Her departure from home drew near. The wedding was to take place in Versailles, but brilliant farewell banquets were given by both the Empress and the French ambassador in Vienna.

In the midst of all these, in the apparently glowing prospect for the future which was opening out for the Archduchess as Queen of France in due course, there was a feeling of depression, both in herself and in all around her.

Dr. Gassner, formerly a priest, who pretended he could see far into futurity, was at this time in Vienna.

Maria Theresa patronised him and laughed at his prophecies, but at the same time she listened to them with interest.

"Tell me," she asked one day, "will my daughter Antonia be happy?"

Gassner looked earnestly at the young Princess, became pale, and would not reply.

When the Empress pressed him, he said at length:—

"Every shoulder has to bear a cross."

During the interval before the wedding Maria Theresa could hardly look at her daughter without her eyes filling with tears. She had her bed brought into her own room, she took her on to her lap, kissed her fair hair and her eyes, talked to her of her future, and begged her not to forget Austria, because France was to become her home.

"How glad I should be if I could keep you with me," said she, "but I sacrifice my own feelings for the good of Austria and for your happiness, which I trust is secured. Write to me frequently. I shall weep over your letters. I cannot write like Madame de Sévigné, but I love you quite as dearly as she loved her daughter."

The ceremonious offer of marriage had been made April 16th, 1770, through the French ambassador, le Marquis de Durfort, and the following day the Archduchess renounced all pretensions to the Austrian throne.

The imperial document was signed at the Hofburg in Vienna, when the family, the court, the nobility, and the deputies filled the state-room and surrounded the throne.

When all were assembled, the Empress entered with the young Princess. They were received in deep silence, and Maria Theresa was so overcome with emotion, and her hand shook so painfully, that she could hardly guide her pen to affix her signature. Then Marie Antoinette signed her name, deeply touched too at the thought of leaving her beloved home.

She left Vienna April 21st. Her mother could hardly release her from her embrace, and sobs choked her voice, so that at last Antonia had to tear herself from her arms and hasten from the Castle, through crowds of friends and servants, to throw herself into the carriage, which had difficulty in forcing a way through the crowded streets. An eye-witness relates that "Austria's capital looked a perfect picture of sorrow." Sobs were heard everywhere, and all were inconsolable at the departure of the Princess.

In one account of the period we have, "The whole city had come forth, at first in silent sorrow. Then she appeared lying back in the carriage, her face bathed in tears; now covering her eyes with her handkerchief, now with her hands. Several times she put her head out of the carriage window and looked at her father's castle to which she was never to return, while expressing her sorrow and gratitude to the masses of people who crowded round her to say 'good-bye.' Then the populace broke forth, not into tears, but into a piercing shriek."

Marie Antoinette was only fourteen, and she wept at the thought of what she was leaving, as well as the uncertainty of the future in this new phase of her life.

CHAPTER II.

Marie Antoinette's Journey—Her Reception in France—
Wedding Festivities.

MARIE ANTOINETTE'S journey through Munich, Augsburg, and several other cities lasted a fortnight.

Everywhere there were crowds curious to see the Austrian Archduchess who was to become Dauphiness of France, and all were charmed with her graciousness.

As she crossed the frontier of the lands under her mother's rule she lost all self-control, exclaiming as she wept bitterly, "I shall never see you again."

At the French frontier, on a small island in the Rhine, a tent had been erected for the occasion, with one large partition and two smaller rooms, of which one was for the suite of the Archduchess from Vienna, the other for the French ladies who had come to meet her.

Here the Princess had to allow herself to be entirely undressed. As she was entering her new country she had to put on the clothes which her future attendants had brought with them, and change even linen, shoes, and stockings.

Her first lady-in-waiting, the Comtesse de Noailles, approached her and made three formal curtseys; but, lively and natural as she was, Marie Antoinette did not notice the stern appearance of the lady, but threw her arms round her neck, while she begged her to comfort her and to be her guide and friend.

In the same moment the ladies who had accompanied her from Germany drew near to kiss her hand for the last time. She embraced them all, wept, and sent loving messages to her mother, her brothers and sisters, and her friends.

Then she turned to the French ladies and said, "Forgive me;

these tears are for my family and the country I am leaving; but from this moment I will not forget that I am French."

The reception which she met with in France surpasses all description. As she had been loved in Germany, so on the other side of the Rhine all hearts turned towards her as she passed along. Fourteen years old, fair and refined, with the stamp of innocence on her brow, she conquered all hearts in spite of French prejudice against the house of Habsburg.

Her grace and amiability called forth a perfect delirium of enthusiasm. Peasants came from every direction, and the roads were strewn with flowers, while girls in their smartest clothes offered her bouquets. Her carriage was surrounded, and when her face could be seen there was a cry as from one mouth:—

"How lovely our Princess is!"

In Strasburg—the city which Louis XIV. had conquered—she was received by Louis XV.'s envoy-extraordinary, as she entered the fine old town, amid the thunder of cannon and the pealing of bells. Triumphal arches were erected in the streets through which she passed. The ladies of the city strewed flowers, or, dressed as shepherdesses, offered her fruit. Amusements were provided for the people, fountains flowed with wine, and gifts were distributed among the poor.

A few miles from Châlons a village priest and his parishioners came to welcome the Archduchess.

He had taken the Canticles of Solomon as a text for the speech he meant to make, but as soon as he saw her he was so overwhelmed with emotion and surprise that he never got beyond the first word. He taxed his memory again and again, looked up to the skies and down to the tips of his boots, but could not recall an idea.

Marie Antoinette noticed it and hid the laughter she could hardly control, while, to put an end to the poor man's confusion, she took his hand, and, with the sweetest and most graceful of smiles, accepted the bouquet which he was offering to her.

Upon this the priest recovered, not his speech, but his presence of mind.

"Madame," said he, gazing at her with admiration, "do not be surprised that my memory has failed me, for at the sight of so

much grace even Solomon would have forgotten his 'Song of Songs,' and would have ceased to think of his lovely Egyptian."

While she was thus nearing her journey's end amid rejoicings, but inward anxiety, the royal family had assembled in Compiègne in order to welcome her, and Louis XV. was especially excited at the thought of the meeting.

No sooner did Marie Antoinette perceive him than she rushed from the carriage and threw herself at his feet. Louis looked at her with more curiosity than fatherly interest. He found her much more beautiful than he had expected, far lovelier than the picture which had been sent to him from Vienna. He raised her and kissed her, while Marie Antoinette blushed under this mark of affection and the King's questioning looks.

During all this time the Dauphin stood by his grandfather's side, much more embarrassed than his *fiancée*, uneasily moving his body backwards and forwards without finding a word to say to her.

At last he allowed himself to follow the custom of the French court, and silently and coldly kissed her on the right cheek.

Surrounded by shouting masses the royal procession drove from Compiègne to St. Denis. Here the Archduchess was introduced to the King's second daughter, who had retired into a Carmelite nunnery in that city, and from there they drove to "La Muette," where she was received by Clotilde and Elisabeth, the Dauphin's two young sisters, so that it was not till late in the evening that she reached Versailles.

The following day, May 16th, the marriage was to take place.

At ten o'clock in the morning the Princess entered the marble hall of the Castle, where she was met by both the King and the Dauphin; then, accompanied by their suite, they entered the chapel. Here, kneeling and much overcome, the young couple swore fidelity to each other at the foot of the altar.

The marriage certificate had been previously signed, and the superstitious remarked and remembered that the bride had made a blot which effaced half of her name.

The ceremony was hardly over when a fearful storm broke forth.

Versailles was to have been illuminated, and the people of

Paris had hastened thither to see the bridal procession, but the Bengal fire could not be lighted, and the illuminations were drowned in rain. The curious spectators, who were wandering through the Castle gardens and the streets, fled in the greatest disorder, pursued by perfect streams of water, lightning, and crashing thunder.

In the interior of the Castle the royal festivities were progressing, but even in these splendid halls there were signs that here also all was not bright.

In order to do honour to Maria Theresa, Louis XV. had decided that the Princess of Lorraine, cousin to the Empress, and the only relation of the Dauphiness in France, should take precedence immediately after the royal princes and princesses, which greatly incensed the dukes and high nobility of France.

Several duchesses were absent from the ball, while others obstinately refused to let the Princess of Lorraine dance before them, until a royal command forced them to obey; even then immediately after the dance they ordered their carriages and returned to Paris.

A series of brilliant court festivities followed the wedding-day, and the elegant dresses, glittering ornaments, handsome carriages, richly furnished tables, and Bengal illuminations formed a sad contrast to the condition of the capital and the country, where the people were in want of bread. Nevertheless, they hastened every evening to Versailles in order to admire the four million lamps that were hung in the garden and park, and shone like stars in the clear spring night.

The fêtes lasted continuously for a fortnight, and it was not till the music was silent and the lights were extinguished that the nation realized that all these ceremonies had cost twenty million francs. The sum was to come out of the State coffers, and of course it was not yet paid.

"What did you think of my entertainments?" the King asked of his finance minister. It is asserted that the minister replied:—

"I found them invaluable, Your Majesty."

When Versailles had finished Paris wished to celebrate the marriage with a popular fête and a magnificent display of fireworks on the Place Louis XV.

Unfortunately the necessary precautions were not taken, the Bengal fire was a failure, and the mob became uncontrollable. The police were absent, or inefficient, and the city guard, who were at hand, tried to maintain order, but could not restrain the crowd. Pickpockets, reaping a good harvest, added to the confusion, while a fire broke out, and the scaffolding round the statue of Louis XV. was burnt down. Many were trodden to death in the struggle, others were pushed into the river, numbers were wounded, and thirty-two dead bodies were found.

The Dauphiness was driving to Paris to see the illuminations, and heard of the misfortune on the road. She at once gave all the money she possessed for distribution among the survivors, and the Dauphin was equally distressed with his wife at the accident which accompanied the last of their wedding festivities. He sent his income for a month to the prefect of police in Paris, and begged him to alleviate the distress. His example was followed by the other princes and many of the nobility.

But a general depression reigned in the capital which simple beneficence could but slightly touch, and there were many who saw in this painful circumstance omens of the awful future in store.

CHAPTER III.

Court Life in Versailles—The Duc de Vauguyon—The Daughters of Louis XV.—The Dauphin and his Diary.

No court was ever more beset with conspiracies than the one into which Marie Antoinette had entered, where bitter party strife, low and foul intrigues, hatred, spite, and inordinate striving after power prevailed on all sides.

Two parties were struggling for the upper hand at the French court in 1770.

One, at this time the stronger, was that of the chief minister, Choiseul. The other was led by the chancellor, Maupeou, and the Comtesse de Marsan, gouvernante to the Dauphiness.

To this same party belonged, moreover, the Duc de Vauguyon, the Dauphin's incompetent tutor, and, finally, the King's mistress, Madame du Barry, whom Maupeou had induced to come over to his side, mainly because she could not forgive the proud, independent behaviour of Choiseul towards her.

In addition to these principal parties were a number of smaller ones, of which the members were all, more or less, intriguing, false, and immoral.

This life in Versailles, where men put their wives on one side for their mistresses, where wives thought it only natural to deceive their husbands, where the King himself set the very worst example, was indeed but a sad one into which to introduce a child of fifteen, who had never seen anything but what was good at home. Opinions, rules, life itself, all was different to what she had been accustomed to.

People did not seem to worship the same God; she did not understand their conduct, and she was certainly not understood by them, so that it was indeed difficult for her to carry herself

aright in this slippery path, where the least false step meant danger.

Much as she may have wished to hold herself aloof from parties, it became impossible for her to do so, and she was obliged to place herself on one side or the other.

Her mother had advised her to attach herself to Choiseul's party, for, as it was he who had brought about her marriage, a feeling of gratitude alone required her to give him her confidence.

But this would have exposed her to the hatred and persecution of the opposite side, some of whom spoke ill of her and tried to destroy her popularity. Others—wiser in their generation—did their utmost to gain an influence over her, and she had not been a month in Versailles before she was surrounded by countless intrigues.

The first step was to dismiss Abbé Vermond, who had accompanied her to France; afterwards the Comtesse de Noailles. A maidservant of very doubtful character was then put in close attendance, and even an untrustworthy father confessor was forced upon her.

Not only was every effort made to turn Louis XV. against her, but also to keep her husband away from her.

The Dauphin should have been her natural guide and protector, but his own indecision of character kept him continually in leading strings.

As a child his health was weak, and he was sent, under the charge of the Comtesse de Marsan, to Bellevue, where an entirely country life for many years restored him to health.

His father, the only son of Louis XV., had died in 1769, so that young Louis was only fourteen when he became Dauphin, and about sixteen when he married.

When Marie Antoinette came to France the credulous youth was still entirely ruled by his tutor, the Duc de Vauguyon, who by no means meant to lose his influence, in spite of this change of circumstances. The teacher would not understand that his power ceased the day on which his pupil was married, and he did not shrink from even the most despicable means to plot against the Dauphiness. He maintained he had a right to enter their

presence at all hours, and placed Marie Antoinette's apartments as far away as possible from those of her husband. He questioned the servants, listened at her door, and accused her to the King.

This continual spying went so far that Marie Antoinette became angry and impatient, and one day she said to Vauguyon :—

"The Dauphin no longer requires a tutor, and I do not need a spy. I request, therefore, that you will not enter my presence again."

* * * * * *

With Louis XV. lived his three unmarried daughters—Adelaide, Victoria, and Sophia.

As we have already said, a fourth daughter, Louisa, had left the court to retire to a poor nunnery, after naming her intention to the King alone.

The veil which separated her from the world did not, however, completely shut it out from her knowledge.

Cardinal Fleury, who had improved the financial system in the early part of the reign, had carried his economy so far as to persuade the King to allow his daughters to be brought up in a nunnery as ordinary boarders.

In consequence the princesses did not know their alphabet at twelve years old, and they could not read fluently until after their return to Versailles, when the Dauphin interested himself in his sisters; and partly under his guidance, partly alone, they tried to make up for the defects of their cloister education.

Princess Adelaide, the eldest, had the best abilities. In her youth she had been pretty, but all traces of beauty had completely disappeared. She had awkward manners, a hard voice, and something masculine in her whole being which was not attractive. She had an insatiable desire to learn, and played all kinds of instruments, from a bugle to a Jew's harp. She studied the Italian and English languages, mathematics, clock-making, and carpentering. Although it was not quite usual at this period, it is worthy of note that she wrote her own language well and correctly, and was, besides, well versed in the history of her country.

She was the favourite child of Louis XV. Her active mind

made her long for a more prominent position, but hitherto she had had no scope for her powers. Ambitious and conscious of her rank, she suffered acutely at being treated as a cipher; but she would allow no contradiction, and avenged herself for the neglect which tortured her, by "pin-pricks," which she dealt right and left whenever she had the chance.

Princess Victoria was prettier than her elder sister, and was naturally mild and good; if she had had the courage to follow the dictates of her own heart she would probably have made the court much more comfortable than it was. But she was phlegmatic, not to say apathetic, and all the four princesses had but one will, that of Adelaide.

Sophia, the youngest, had an unusually unprepossessing appearance, and she was painfully timid. In order not to see people, and yet to be able to recognize them, she had acquired a nervous side glance, which made her look like a hare, and she was so shy that one might pass years in her company without hearing her utter a word. And yet there were occasions when this peculiar princess could become courteous and communicative, and that was during a thunderstorm!

So great was her terror then that she went up to any person near, and if it lightened she pressed their hands, and when the thunder rolled she kissed the court ladies in her fright. But as soon as the weather changed her usual stiff demeanour returned, and again she would pass by her companions apparently without seeing them. It was not until a fresh storm roused her fears that her friendliness was again shown.

After the death of their mother, Marie Leczinska, the princesses had for a time fulfilled the duties of hostess at the court. Enslaved in the toils of his mistress, the King saw comparatively little of his family.

He went every morning by a secret staircase down to Princess Adelaide, sometimes carrying a cup of coffee, which he drank in her apartment. Then she rang a bell to let Victoria know that the King had come, and while the latter was hastening to her sister another bell summoned the Princess Sophia.

The apartments of all three were large, and numbers of rooms had to be traversed before the daily meeting-place could be

reached. Although Sophia ran quickly, arriving tired and breathless, she had barely time to greet her father, who went hunting immediately on leaving Princess Adelaide's room.

Every afternoon at six o'clock, both princes and princesses went to the King, accompanied by chamberlains, ladies-in-waiting, pages and lacqueys, carrying wax candles. This visit was strictly one of ceremony, and seldom lasted more than a quarter of an hour.

The three princesses were devout but extremely narrow-minded in their religious views, and we are led to believe that they were not particularly amiable. They kept themselves in the background, were awkward when they had to see people, and stood in great awe of their father. They did not know what they ought to do or to say; in short, they never understood the art of inspiring the respect to which, by their high birth, they were entitled.

But in secret they were involved in all kinds of intrigues, and were all the more eager to make a show of possessing influence, as they had really none.

They were not elderly,—Adelaide was thirty-eight when Marie Antoinette came to Versailles,—but they were old maids, and had all the weaknesses of the class: they were exacting, jealous, narrow, sensitive, and fond of scandal.

But, in spite of their faults, it was natural that Marie Antoinette should try to be friendly with them, and before she left home her mother said to her:—

"Keep close to your aunts, they are virtuous and accomplished, and you are fortunate in having them. I hope you will make yourself worthy of their friendship."

Since the death of the late Dauphiness they had taken precedence at court, but the arrival of Marie Antoinette gave them the second place, and it is undoubted that Adelaide, at least, looked with displeasure on this child, who was usurping her position.

But, although full of secret hate, the aunts received the young Austrian with apparent friendship. We cannot believe that they acknowledged any duty towards this young niece, cast without guide or rudder on the stormy waves of court life at Versailles;

still less is it probable that they felt themselves under the influence of her bewitching charm. It is far more likely that they attached themselves to her for their own ends. Jealous of the new star that had appeared on the court horizon, they watched their rival only to be able to injure her the more easily. A certain intimacy sprang up between Marie Antoinette and the elder ladies, the result of which was soon apparent.

The princesses did not like public life, they lived in a little circle of their own, the very air of which was filled with ill-natured gossip; and, although a stranger, Marie Antoinette was easily persuaded to take part in their disgraceful calumnies.

Naturally bright, and ready to be amused at the ludicrous side of her companions, she did not weigh her words, but thought she was safe in this inner circle. Her fun was told to others and maliciously interpreted. It was said that she imitated persons in high positions behind their backs, and laughed in the face of others.

The cheerfulness of the Dauphiness did not last long; she was soon as embarrassed as her aunts, and did not dare to address a word to persons in a high position. She withdrew as much as possible from public duties, and when compelled to fulfil them she was painfully nervous.

"The princesses are not content with influencing the Dauphiness in things which concern her personally," the Austrian Ambassador once wrote to Maria Theresa, "they extend their control over those in her service. They treat her prerogatives with contempt, and ignore the marked difference of rank that ought to exist between their household and that of the Dauphiness."

The mother became alarmed at this undue influence, and wrote to her daughter:—

"I hear in all my letters that you only do what your aunts tell you. I esteem them, but they have never been able to command respect, either in their own family or in the nation, and you seem to be following in their footsteps."

Maria Theresa proudly drew a comparison between the consideration she had had in her life and the insignificance of the French princesses.

"Does my affection, my counsel, deserve less respect than theirs? I confess this thought distresses me greatly. Think of

the reception they have met with in the world, and—it costs me an effort to say it—what a part I have played! You must trust me all the more if I advise you to act differently from them. I do not compare myself with these worthy princesses, whom I esteem for their sterling qualities; but, I must repeat it again and again, they have not understood how to make themselves respected by their people, or beloved by a single person. By their ultra good nature and submission to others they have become unpleasant, uncomfortable, and wearisome to themselves and others, as well as a centre for intrigue and gossip. Am I to be silent if I see you treading the same path? I love you too much to be able, or willing, to do so. Your obvious silence on the subject grieves me very much, and gives but little hope that you will alter your conduct."

But a change did come.

By degrees Marie Antoinette began to see that her mother was right. She could not all at once burst the bonds which her youth and isolated position had helped to form, and which daily life had strengthened, but her confidence was shaken.

Respect and habit made her attentive to the advice of the princesses, though in the course of a year or two their influence became weakened, and when she yielded to them it was from politeness or fear.

The elder ladies did not bear with complacency their loss of power over their niece, and began to criticise her in public, instead of only in private as formerly.

So great was their zeal to find causes of complaint that they appealed to the King because she had one day come to them without ceremony and in shabby clothes.

Louis XV. made her understand that such neglect of court ceremony was injurious to the respect due to the princesses, adding that her parsimony would render her unpopular among the French tradesmen.

"My court dresses," replied Marie Antoinette, "shall be as elegant as those of any previous dauphiness or queen of France, if such is the wish of Your Majesty; but I beg my dear grandfather to be indulgent about my morning gowns."

Then the aunts tried to excite the whole court against her,

turning the tiniest detail into a slander. They brought about a quarrel between Abbé Vermond and the governess of the royal princesses, Madame Marsan, which caused a great sensation.

Princess Adelaide maintained that her nieces had received a much better education than the Austrian archduchesses. Thanks to their convent bringing up, she said, the French princesses were bodily strong, while the Austrian archduchesses, who were accustomed to idleness, and had none but worldly interests, were thin and shrivelled, poor both in mind and body.

Adelaide was right in so far as both her sisters, and one of her nieces, were much fatter than Marie Antoinette. Princess Clotilde's stout figure had gained her the nicknames of "the fat princess" and "the little pig."

The Princess Elisabeth, renowned in later years for her piety and devotion, was only six when her brother married, and as a child she was noted for her impetuosity, disobedience, and idleness.

But Marie Antoinette had still other faults: she was too lively and fond of fun!

Child as she was she refused to wear stays, sometimes she omitted to clean her teeth; she liked to laugh and whisper in the ears of the young ladies at court; she would not listen to the requests of her waiting-women, ruined her clothes, and irritated all about her by her want of order.

The malicious conduct of her aunts was a continual hindrance to the daughter of Maria Theresa; for, when they found it impossible to rule her as Dauphiness, they determined to injure her as Queen of France, and unfortunately gained their end only too well.

Their influence had been pernicious, their hatred was fatal, and at the Castle of Bellevue, where the princesses lived during the reign of Louis XVI., there was always a warm welcome for anyone who could tell a compromising story about Marie Antoinette, whom Adelaide pursued through life with bitter hatred.

The Queen's enemies knew they had a friend in the Princess, whose house was a centre for all intrigues against Her Majesty.

It was Adelaide who gave her the nickname of "the Austrian,"

and a large number of libels which had been sent broadcast over the land to injure her character could be traced to Bellevue.

When the court attendants were leaving to meet the Archduchess at the frontier, one of the ladies had sought Adelaide in order to enquire if she had any orders to give.

The Princess replied shortly:—

"Even if it were in my power to give orders, I should certainly not send a message to an Austrian."

One day later on, when Marie Antoinette had shown a firmness her aunts had not suspected in her, the Princess observed ill-naturedly:—

"It is easy to see that you are not a member of *our* family."

Years before his marriage Aunt Adelaide had exercised great influence over young Louis, whom she had solaced in his lonely childhood and loved almost like a mother, and when he became King, Louis retained a very high respect for her opinion and judgment.

She represented to him the dangers that might arise from a union with Austria, and revived half-dormant family recollections, telling him about his father, who had been put down and treated as a child by the minister Choiseul. She hinted to her nephew an old report that his father's death was caused by poison, and prompted the suspicion that Choiseul had had something to do with it.

The influence of the tutor Vauguyon had originally separated Louis from his bride, but it was the work of his aunt that Marie Antoinette remained his wife in name only for seven years. Long after, when Louis had changed from the indifferent husband to the submissive and devoted lover, the Queen said to him:—

"Your aunts are still trying to set you against me; it is they who would dictate your very words."

The lonely country life which Louis had led in his childhood and early youth had made him timid, awkward, and diffident. He would have preferred to remain Duc de Berry all his life, and replied with sobs to the first congratulations upon becoming Dauphin.

He had no intercourse with the outer world, and people took no notice of him, except to contrast his life with that of the

courtiers of Versailles, where he was completely ignored by his grandfather. His great physical strength called for bodily exercise, which made him take to manual labour. He had a tower built and fitted up as a smithy, so that the odour of the workshop, not that of the court, pervaded his whole person and his grimy hands. Madame du Barry called him "that fat, ill-mannered boy." Count Mercy-Argenteau, the Austrian Ambassador, relates that he was nearly always busy at the forge, doing mason's work, or carting materials, and that he left his occupation bathed in perspiration, and looking as exhausted as if he had just come from a battlefield.

Courtiers overlooked the stingy, silent prince, who had no thought for beauty; but the people called him "their darling," and during his country walks he liked to visit the peasants, chat with them, and shake hands.

Having two brothers who possessed more shining qualities than himself, he was not slow to notice that they were treated with far more deference than he was, and this depressed him, making him more shy and irresolute than he was by nature.

Pained by these continual slights he soon became bitter, and as a child he was often found crying, while his brothers and sisters were playing around him. "I want somebody to love," he would exclaim with his eyes full of tears; "there is nobody here that cares for me."

And once, when a man from some country district made him a speech and praised him, he answered hastily:—

"You are mistaken, it is not I who have these talents but my brother, the Comte de Provence."

It was in such moments as these that his aunt Adelaide had come forward, taken him to her heart, and laid the foundation for the intimate, confidential intercourse between them.

Louis was upright; he loved the people, but he was wanting in the firmness which inspires respect.

His goodness often became weakness, his candour made him violent in speech, and his jokes were generally coarse.

This scion of kings was never anything but a boor.

He was short and clumsy. His head was well formed, and he carried it well; but his large puffy cheeks, and his dull, protrud-

ing, near-sighted eyes made him look irresolute and stupid, while his uncertain gait and general shy appearance tended to deepen the impression.

His voice was hard when it was not shrill; his hair stuck out on all sides, as he had a habit of incessantly running his fingers through it; he was generally seen with dirty clothes and black hands; and, moreover, he was entirely wanting in those personal advantages one expects to find in the descendant of an old and noble race.

He avoided women, their society was a worry to him, and when his feelings were at last roused towards her who was chosen to share his destiny, his love was barely strong enough to master his shyness. "He is not like others," Louis XV. said of him, and a courtier called him, not without cause, "the best, but not the most attractive man in the kingdom."

At the wedding banquet he was eating with his usual inordinate appetite, when his grandfather could not refrain from saying, "Do not overload your stomach."

"Why not?" asked the Dauphin, "I always sleep best after a good supper."

The bridal pair retired, and he accompanied his young wife to the door of her room, where he remained standing, bowed, and politely wished her "Good-night." Then he hastened away, as if she had inspired him with disgust. They met at breakfast the next morning, when he said, "I hope you have slept well."

"Very well," answered the Dauphiness, "not a soul came to disturb me."

This somewhat singular beginning of their married life was discussed with additions and much laughter at the court of Louis XV., and the tinge of ridicule which the circumstance cast over the Dauphin never left him as Louis XVI.

His faulty education, combined with the Princess Adelaide's unwholesome influence, were the real causes of his reserve towards Marie Antoinette; but in Versailles it was entirely attributed to his dislike to a marriage with a princess of the house of Austria.

His wife, who had no other advantage from her title than that of seeing her husband eat and drink voraciously, even to excess,

felt herself hurt at coldness, the cause of which she could not understand. It was but scant consolation for her to be told that the Dauphin had declared himself quite satisfied with her, and had said that he thought her pretty.

How little Marie Antoinette occupied his thoughts can be seen in Louis' diary for the week in which his marriage took place:—

Sunday, May 13th [1770]: "Left Versailles. Supped and slept at Monsieur de Saint Florentin's, in Compiègne."

Monday, May 14th: "Met the Archduchess."

Tuesday, May 15th: "Supped at La Muette, slept at Versailles."

Wednesday, May 16th: "My wedding. A party in the gallery. Royal banquet in the theatre."

Thursday, May 17th: "Opera—*Perseus.*"

Friday, May 18th: "Stag-hunting. Big field at Belle-Image. Shot one."

Saturday, May 19th: "Ball in the theatre. Illuminations."

The first month after his wedding winds up with the following observation in his diary: "I have had the stomach-ache."

CHAPTER IV.

Marie Antoinette's First Introduction into the great World—How the Dauphiness Spent her Day—The Comte and Comtesse de Provence—The Comte and Comtesse d'Artois—Theatricals and Dancing.

In spite of the plots and intrigues which so many persons were weaving round Marie Antoinette, her early days in France were far from unhappy.

The King felt his youth renewed for a moment at the sight of this pretty, innocent child, whose presence brought a breath of purity into the vitiated air of the court. He noticed that she was too lively and too childish, but still he thought it natural at her age. He loaded her with presents and gave her a set of diamonds on her arrival, besides a casket full of ornaments on her wedding-day. Later on he gave her the pearls and diamonds which had belonged to the late Dauphiness, together with a necklace which Anne of Austria used to wear.

The people were infatuated by her friendliness and gracious manners, and the members of her household felt themselves flattered by the consideration which she showed them. Old courtiers were charmed with her, and Choiseul left her, after long interviews, completely enraptured. But the Austrian Ambassador, Count Mercy-Argenteau, who knew the manner of life at Versailles and understood the French character, was not blind, and he knew that even this warm reception might be the precursor of danger.

A few months after her arrival he wrote to the Empress: "We must not let ourselves be dazzled by this welcome, which she deserves, but remember that with this frivolous, lively people, and at a court so full of intrigue, it is far easier to gain popularity at first than to maintain it afterwards."

She had far too many persons about her whose interest it was to injure her, and her own personal charms were too striking not to be dangerous.

From the first, without reflection and without reticence, she did not hide her feelings nor weigh her words. The spontaneous frankness which was one of her charms was also a source of trouble to her. Her easily-won confidence exposed her to gossip and slander, while her good heart made her the dupe of all who sought her favour.

The following letter which Marie Antoinette wrote to her mother, June 12th, 1770, gives a description of how she passed her day:—

"Your Majesty is kind enough to be interested in me, and writes to know how I spend my time. I will therefore say that I get up at half-past nine or ten o'clock, and after I am dressed I say my first morning prayer. Then I breakfast before going to my aunts, where I generally meet the King—this visit lasts till half-past ten. At eleven o'clock my hair is dressed, and at twelve the courtiers are called in and anybody is admitted, except common people. I rouge myself and wash my hands in their presence; then the gentlemen leave, and the ladies remain while I finish my dressing. In the middle of the day there is divine service, and when the King is at Versailles I go with him, my husband, and my aunts to hear mass. If he is not there I go with the Dauphin alone, but always at the same hour. Then we two dine in public. This only lasts about half an hour, as we both eat very fast. Then I go to the Dauphin's rooms, or, if he is busy, I return to my own apartments, where I read, write, or work. I am making a waistcoat for the King, which does not get on very fast; but I hope, with God's grace, it will be finished in the course of a few years. At three o'clock I go again to my aunts, and often find the King with them. At four o'clock the Abbé comes to me, and every day at five a music or singing master, who stays till six. At half-past six I nearly always return to my aunts, unless I go for a walk, when, you must know, my husband generally accompanies me. From seven to nine we play cards, unless the weather is fine, when I am out, and they play without me, at my aunts', instead of in my apart-

ments. We have supper at nine o'clock, and, if the King is present, my aunts come to us; but if he is away, we go to them —we generally wait for the King till a quarter to eleven. While we are waiting I lie on a large sofa and sleep till the King comes; but, if he does not appear, we go to bed at eleven. This is our whole day."

It was a life filled with petty social duties, but empty, void of any serious occupation. She had barely time to write to her mother, and was often obliged to do so while being dressed. If a few minutes to fulfil this filial duty were not to be had, it is clear that she found still less time for her own education, which was far from complete, as we know, and which she had certainly not the least wish to improve, to the great grief of Maria Theresa.

The mother felt too late that she had not sufficiently watched over her daughter's education, and she wished Marie Antoinette to make up for all deficiencies now.

She begged for precise information about the daily employment of her time, and desired that an account might be sent to her at regular intervals.

This request caused much embarrassment to Marie Antoinette, whose dislike to reading, and easy yielding to pleasure, had continually led her to neglect the lessons which were appointed in the crowded programme of her daily life.

Not that she was literally idle, but it might happen that while she was reading she had a sudden desire to go out if she saw the sun was shining; or she preferred to listen to what one or another was saying, and which had nothing to do with the study on hand; or she would begin to run about and play with her lap-dog.

She therefore did not know how to reply to her mother. Too frank and honourable to tell a lie, it was none the less a great effort to her to say what was true. Maria Theresa repeated her request again and again, sometimes writing with a severity which was not always justifiable.

One day she wrote to her:—

"Try and fill your mind with good reading; do not neglect to turn this sort of learning to good account; it is more useful to you than anything else, doubly so because you are not accomplished in any way. You are no musician, you cannot draw nor

paint, nor dance, nor are you possessed of any special talent, which makes me revert again and again to your reading, and I desire you to order Abbé Vermond to send me each month a report of what you have done, and a plan of your future work."

This letter was too severe, and missed its mark. Marie Antoinette felt deeply hurt.

"The Empress will make people think I am a goose," she said, as she showed her teacher the letter her mother had written; though, after she had become calmer, she added:—

"I will write to the Empress and say that it is not possible for me to study regularly during the carnival, but that I will begin to be more industrious in Lent. That is true, is it not?"

"Yes," answered the Abbé, "provided you really mean it."

In the meantime Maria Theresa was not to be appeased with promises, and in her next letter she returned to the charge:—

"I am expecting with impatience, and by return of post, the report of your reading and industry. It is allowable to amuse one's self, especially at your age. But to make pleasure an occupation, to do nothing serious or useful, to kill time with walks and visits, alas! my child, in the long run you will learn how empty such a life is, and you will bitterly regret that you did not employ your time more profitably. I must call your attention to the fact that your letters become more and more incorrect and badly written. You ought to have improved in the course of ten months. I felt quite humiliated when I saw the letters you had written to some ladies at court pass from one to another. You must write copies, so that your handwriting may become better and more regular."

The neglect of fixed occupation was far from being the only reproach which Maria Theresa addressed to her daughter. The very air wafted towards her from home was full of reprimands, and motherly care was watching over her in everything.

Between the lines of her mother's letters the Dauphiness seemed to see the anxious furrowed brow of the Empress, and, in spite of all severity, she was thirsting to see her again, and wept each time she saw the familiar handwriting. Maliciously persecuted, surrounded by spies, married without being a wife,

alone in the midst of a scandalous court, without support, without a soul in whom she could confide, her thoughts reverted to her mother a thousand times with love and tenderness.

* * * * *

The year after Marie Antoinette's arrival in France the Dauphin's brother, the Comte de Provence, married the elder daughter of the King of Piedmont, and the following year the Comte d'Artois married her younger sister.

These three couples thus formed a little circle of their own, apart from the disgraceful pleasures of the King and his mistress. They led a quiet life without exciting much attention.

The Comte de Provence, who was the intellectual head of the family, was not on the best of terms with the Dauphin, and never forgave him for being the firstborn, and thus heir to the throne. The Comtesse, too, would have had the precedence if her husband had been Dauphin, and she could never conceive how it was that an Austrian archduchess had been chosen for Louis before a princess of the house of Savoy. So Marie Antoinette was quite justified in feeling but little confidence towards her and her husband, although she was apparently on good terms with them.

The Comtesse d'Artois was more good-natured than her sister, simple in her habits, and modest of character. She has, moreover, been described as a little goose, whose only merit consisted in providing the house of Bourbon with heirs. So insignificant was she that once, when she was dangerously ill, the remark was made:—"The day of her funeral will be the first on which she attracts any attention."

Chivalrous and gay, but thoughtless, given to gambling, and too fond of pretty women, the Comte d'Artois was the leading spirit in every amusement. He enjoyed life in Paris and Versailles, on horseback, at the card table, and at court and theatrical balls, imitating at every point the vicious life of his grandfather.

But the Dauphin preferred his thoughtlessness to his other brother's calculating reserve.

In these early days Marie Antoinette received a great deal of attention from her younger brother-in-law, whose lively taste and disposition were in accordance with her own. In order to bring

a little variety into their monotonous life, Marie Antoinette, the two brothers-in-law and their wives, took to acting plays, while the Dauphin, lolling in an easy chair, represented the audience. He yawned from sheer weariness if all went well, but if the actors did not know their parts he became attentive, and began to laugh and enjoy himself.

His loud snoring during the performance one day warned the young players of the effect their efforts had upon him, and this want of interest did not fail to rouse the wrath of Marie Antoinette.

"If you do not like our acting," she exclaimed angrily, "go away, and your money shall be returned to you."

But the actors took their revenge on him for his lack of artistic perception.

The Dauphin, who looked upon dancing as hard work, had one evening summoned up courage to dance a quadrille, and emerged from this sort of bath steaming with perspiration, besides having made so many mistakes that he was requested not to think of dancing again until he had had some practice.

He began, therefore, to study the art with closed doors, and ordered that on no account was anybody to be allowed an entrance. So His Royal Highness hopped about and around, while the perspiration streamed down his flabby cheeks. But in the midst of his exertions he was disturbed by a sudden sharp sound, and, looking up, he saw his younger brother in a gallery whistling and laughing to his heart's content.

The Dauphin was very angry and shook his fist at the disrespectful observer, but he continued his exercise.

A few hours later he met the Comte d'Artois in another part of the Castle, and, presuming on his privilege as the eldest, boxed his ears. His brother returned the blow, and Marie Antoinette, who had hastened forwards, tried to separate the combatants, getting scratched for her pains in the heat of the dispute.

But the two brothers were soon reconciled. The Dauphin continued his efforts to learn dancing, but the theatricals had to be abandoned, as the aunts, the ladies-in-waiting, and Abbé Vermond had found out what was going on.

CHAPTER V.

The Dauphiness and Madame du Barry—Maria Theresa's Correspondence with her Daughter.

Princess Adelaide was not the only one to whom the union with the house of Austria had proved distasteful.

It had been discussed with great coolness in France, and the arrival of Marie Antoinette was looked forward to without joy; and it was only when people saw how frank, childlike, pretty, and bright she was that they took to her, and considered Madame de Pompadour less culpable than they thought for yielding to the temptation of this alliance with Maria Theresa. Choiseul, too, was less loudly blamed for his zeal in promoting the marriage.

But it was not so easy to pacify the different court parties, and those usually holding opposite views—the French princesses and the King's mistress—joined in disapproving of the union, because it had been brought about by Choiseul.

Louis XV., who, as we know, allowed himself to be ruled by his mistresses, had, after the death of Madame de Pompadour, fallen under the influence of a woman of notoriously bad character, known in history as Madame du Barry. With health shattered by evil living he had crowned his long list of scandals by raising a woman from the very lowest dregs of society—Jeanne Bécu, nicknamed "The Angel"—to the rank of countess, and a residence in the royal castle.

When Marie Antoinette came to the court the King was almost a helpless tool in the hands of his mistress, who formed one of the first obstacles in the path of the Dauphiness in her new home. The very first evening she spent with the royal family she had to sup before the eyes of the public at the same table with this ill-famed woman.

The young Princess felt deeply hurt, and her purity revolted against the indecencies to which the King's weakness was exposing her, though she did not openly express her displeasure on this occasion. After supper one of the courtiers tried to entrap her by asking her how she liked Madame du Barry.

"I think she is good-looking," answered Marie Antoinette straightforwardly.

That was the first and one of the last times that she was cautious in her expressions.

The Countess was not malicious, rather good-natured, and by no means vindictive; but she was intensely vain, and longed for respect and deference, perhaps all the more because she knew she was not entitled to them.

This woman of bad character had longed to be introduced into society, and her wish was gratified when she saw princes, dukes, ambassadors, and ministers in her rooms.

Then, on the arrival of the Austrian Archduchess, she had expressed the desire to sup with the descendant of so many emperors, and her royal lover had had the cowardly grace to comply with her request.

From her very first entrance into France Marie Antoinette had found herself side by side with this "stupid, impudent creature," as she called her.

She had met her the first evening at La Muette, then at Compiègne, and at Versailles on every conceivable occasion.

She could not bring herself to show the least favour to the Countess, nor condescend to speak a word to such a vicious woman. The Dauphin had the same repulsion against his grandfather's mistress, and hid it no better than his wife.

Madame du Barry became alarmed at this hostile attitude, and her friends, who had nothing in the world to hope for from the Dauphiness, did all that lay in their power to injure her.

They saw she had a strong will in spite of her youth, and they feared, when aided by her personal advantages, her mother's counsel, and the support of Choiseul, she would gain influence over the King, which might prove dangerous to the other side. The question of Austrian influence was mooted, and it was resolved to prevent it by the downfall of the minister.

The King was incited by his mistress, who, after many vain attempts, was able to procure the dismissal of Choiseul.

His successor, the Duc d'Aiguillon, obeyed her to the letter; and the two plotted together against the Dauphiness, whose position had indeed become a difficult one. With his minister on one side and his mistress on the other the King listened incessantly to complaints and accusations against Marie Antoinette, whom he treated with coldness and indifference, in spite of his show of friendship at first.

Louis XV. was fond of his children and grandchildren, but his love was a very selfish one, and provided they allowed him free scope with reference to his pleasures and debaucheries he granted them perfect liberty.

He detested family scenes, and when he had listened to the accusations of Madame du Barry against the Dauphiness he did not seek an explanation from her herself, but sent for one of her ladies.

He began the conversation by praising the character and grace of Marie Antoinette, but complained of her freedom of speech with reference to what she believed to have noticed at court.

The lady returned to her royal mistress, and she hastened to the King, who could not resist her child-like charm. He embraced her and kissed her hands, agreeing with her, too, when she complained of her detractors; so that for this time they were foiled.

After this visit to the King she felt strong to combat with fresh weapons against any new insinuations of her enemies. But she was still ruled by the elder princesses, who did their utmost to keep her away from the King, and even her modest behaviour towards a man so susceptible to youth and beauty only gave rise to fresh intrigues.

New accusations and complaints were continually being made to shake the confidence of Louis XV. in her.

One day—it was July 28th, 1771—the Austrian Ambassador was summoned to the apartments of Madame du Barry, where the King wished to speak to him. Although surprised at such a request, which seemed to him an excuse to entice him into the mistress's apartments, the Ambassador took good care to obey.

He was received by Madame du Barry, who first of all assured him of her friendship, and then confided to him what was sorely troubling her.

"People are making use of the most abominable slander to alienate from me the esteem of the Dauphiness," she said; "she does not let a day pass without treating me with contempt."

The Ambassador replied that he knew nothing about it. In the midst of the conversation the door opened and Louis XV. entered.

"Hitherto," said the King, "you have been Ambassador to the Empress of Austria. I now beg you to become mine, at least for a while."

Then he began to complain of the Dauphiness.

He thought her attractive; but, young and lively as she was, and married to a man who was unable to guide her, it was impossible for her to escape pitfalls. She exposed herself to prejudice and uncalled-for hatred. It was striking how badly she treated some persons whom the King had made his intimates; and such behaviour produced a party spirit at court.

"Visit the Dauphiness frequently," he continued; "I authorise you to repeat to her what you like from me. Somebody is giving her bad advice, which she certainly must not follow."

Count Mercy was too devoted to Marie Antoinette, and saw too clearly through the net of intrigues that was woven around her to delay acquainting her with the words of the King.

He advised her to adopt a decided course. If she wished it to be understood that she was aware of the position of Madame du Barry at court, her dignity required that she should request the King to forbid this woman to enter her drawing-room. If, on the contrary, she allowed it to appear that she did not understand the footing on which the mistress stood, she must treat her as she would any other lady who was introduced at court, and address a few words to her when an opportunity arose.

The advice caused some excitement among those in attendance on the Dauphiness, who, in spite of her mother's warnings, was still led by the Princess Adelaide. Besides, as she had such an intense aversion to Madame du Barry, she felt she could not

bring herself to speak to her. "My aunts do not wish it," she explained.

But, persuaded by Count Mercy, and in a measure by her husband, she was at last induced to yield a little, and it was arranged that at one of the court receptions the Ambassador should enter into a conversation with the mistress, when the Dauphiness should join in with a few words.

The evening came, and all was going smoothly. Mercy went up to Madame du Barry as Marie Antoinette began her *tournée* round the room. She had already reached the spot where the Countess was standing when her aunt Adelaide, who had not lost sight of her for a moment, suddenly raised her voice and said—

"It is high time for us to go. Come!"

The Dauphiness lost her self-possession when she heard this harsh voice, and in her confusion hurried away, so that nothing came of the advance that had been planned.

The King was much displeased, and his mistress felt affronted.

"Your advice has no effect," Louis said to the Austrian Ambassador; "I shall be obliged to help you."

Mercy became anxious; he was afraid the King's wrath would lead him to some unfortunate step, and, to prevent this, he appealed to Maria Theresa, and forcibly entreated her to interfere.

The Empress at this juncture was negotiating with Prussia and Russia about the first partition of Poland. Her magnanimous character revolted against taking part in a political scheme which, as she expressed it, "was a stain upon her whole reign"; and while Count Kaunitz and her son Joseph were trying to persuade her, she persistently wished to defer the deed.

A fresh alliance between France and Austria seemed to her the only means of bringing this about, and made it necessary for her to encourage Marie Antoinette to be very conciliatory towards the party now in the majority.

Hitherto she had not named Madame du Barry to her daughter, but now she suddenly overwhelmed her with reproaches, and expressed opinions contradictory to her character, for she was generally most zealous in inculcating high principles of morality.

"Overcome this reluctance, this fear of saying good-day," she

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wrote to her daughter. "A simple word about a gown, or some other unimportant thing, seems to cause you to shrink with disgust. You have allowed yourself to be cowed to such an extent that neither reason nor duty has the power of convincing you. I can no longer keep silence. After all that my Ambassador has said to you about the King's wishes in this respect you dare to refuse obedience. What reason can you allege as your excuse? None! You must not see Madame du Barry with other eyes than as a lady who is received at court, and is on intimate terms with the King. You are the first among his subjects, and owe him obedience. It is your duty to set a good example to all at court, and to see that your sovereign's will is carried out. If anything wrong, or even familiarity, were required of you, neither I nor anyone else would counsel you to yield. But a simple word, a little consideration—not for the lady, but for your grandfather, your sovereign, your benefactor. You so obviously refuse to please him the very first opportunity when you could render him a service, and such an opportunity will not so easily recur."

"If Your Majesty could possibly see what goes on here," Marie Antoinette wrote in reply to her mother, "you would understand that the said lady and her set would certainly not be satisfied with a word or two, and I should be continually called upon to enter into conversation. I do not say that I will never speak to her, but I will not do so by appointment some fixed day and hour, so that she may tell her friends beforehand, and rejoice in her triumph."

Madame du Barry possessed all the impudence belonging to the class from which she had sprung. At the wedding of the Comte d'Artois she had behaved in the same scandalous manner as at that of the Dauphin, and dined with the whole royal family. On the latter occasion she wore jewels to the value of five million francs.

During the evening reception in the King's apartments she carried her effrontery so far as to seat herself by the side of the Dauphin. She called upon the Dauphiness repeatedly. "If only the Empress could see her behaviour she would excuse me," said Marie Antoinette; "no patience can put up with it."

Instead of counselling her daughter with wisdom, Maria Theresa continued to write her angry, imperative letters.

In order to appease her the Dauphiness at length let a word drop which might seem to be addressed to Madame du Barry.

The Austrian Ambassador was much pleased, but his delight was of short duration.

"I have spoken to her once," said Marie Antoinette, "but I am firmly resolved never to speak to her again. That creature shall not hear the sound of my voice."

It had already been an immense effort to her to speak this once to a being whom she so utterly despised, and she thought that both her mother and the Ambassador ought to be satisfied with the sacrifice she had made.

"I do not doubt," she wrote on this subject to her mother, "that Mercy has told you about my behaviour on New Year's Day, and I trust that Your Majesty is satisfied with me. Believe me that I will always put my own prejudice or antipathy on one side if only I am not required to do anything shameful or dishonouring. It would make my life miserable if contention were to arise between our families. My heart is continually with you, so that in such a case it would indeed be difficult to fulfil my duties here. I shudder at the thought, and trust that nothing will ever destroy our unity, but especially that I shall not be the cause of any estrangement."

Maria Theresa saw in these words a pretext for her daughter's disobedience, and replied, not without bitterness:—

"Can you imagine that my Minister and I would give you advice inconsistent with either honour or propriety? What interest can I possibly have but in what concerns the well-being of your country, the Dauphin, and yourself? Who can advise you better, or deserve your confidence in a higher degree, than my Minister, who thoroughly understands the State and those who are guiding it?"

The Empress reminds Marie Antoinette that, as she cannot create happiness for herself—either by her countenance, which is not particularly pretty; nor by talents, which she certainly does not possess—she dare only look forward to comfort in her life by being a good German woman, and rejoicing in the fact.

In these letters one is always conscious of a ruler, never of a mother, who might rather be tempted to spoil her child than to attempt to coerce her.

In Versailles the Dauphiness was blamed for thinking too much of Vienna, while the court there accused her of forgetting the home of her childhood.

Her mother and Count Mercy strove in vain to make her give up her hostile conduct towards the King's mistress, and the Duc d'Aiguillon, too, urged her to treat her with less contempt. Even the Princess Adelaide, who was beginning to make common cause with the other side, tried to force her niece to tread in her footsteps, but in vain. Neither French influence nor appeals from home could change her feelings towards Madame du Barry.

Even when the mistress seized an opportunity of introducing a newly-married relation at court the Dauphiness would neither speak to her, nor to the bride, her niece. And when Princess Adelaide attempted to influence her Marie Antoinette replied: "Aunt, I advise you to keep aloof from d'Aiguillon's intrigues; he is a bad man."

CHAPTER VI.

Entrance of the Dauphin and Marie Antoinette into Paris—
Louis XV. dies.

THE generality of people in France took but little notice of the enmity between the Dauphiness and Madame du Barry, though it created a lively interest at court, and a few of the newspapers filled their columns with accounts of it, more or less true.

The populace was dazzled by the beauty of the Princess who had come to live among them, just when they hardly knew who there was that could be the object of their traditional love to the Royal house. They heartily accepted her, and as yet believed in her virtue and goodness. She was the bright star to whom all eyes were turned.

It was the custom for the Dauphin and Dauphiness to make a solemn entry into the capital on some fixed day, but on account of these innumerable plots and intrigues it had been delayed from month to month, from year to year, though when Louis and Marie Antoinette came at last in the summer of 1773 the popular enthusiasm was unbounded. Such crowds lined the streets that the gala coach could hardly force its way. The streets were decorated with flowers and triumphal arches, which gave a festive look to the whole city, while the air rang with wild, enthusiastic shouts. People rushed towards the carriage, seized the hands of Marie Antoinette and kissed them, almost coming to blows for the honour of touching her. They overwhelmed her with blessings and good wishes, and did not seem to tire of looking at her and listening to her voice. They clapped their hands, waved their handkerchiefs, and threw their hats into the air; while for each individual Marie Antoinette had a smile, a greeting, or a beaming look from her beautiful eyes.

"You are glad to see us," she said to those who were surrounding her carriage; "we, too, rejoice to see you."

"Les dames de la Halle," who had gone to meet the young couple and offer their congratulations, were invited to lunch in the concert hall of the Tuileries; and, in addition, the entire Castle and gardens were filled with people.

As the Dauphiness stepped out on to the balcony she was rather frightened to see such an immense crowd surging at her feet.

"Madame," said the Prefect of Paris, "I hope that your husband will not be displeased, but down there are 200,000 people who are in love with Your Royal Highness."

The Dauphin was not jealous. The enthusiasm of the multitude and his wife's charms reacted on himself; he overcame his usual shyness, and replied with dignity to the speeches that were addressed to him.

Marie Antoinette could not help weeping for joy.

She took her husband's arm, and they walked about among the people, who had neither flowers enough to throw at their feet, nor voice enough to shout their welcome.

"The dear, good people," exclaimed the Dauphiness continually.

Louis XV., who had so completely lost the love and esteem of his people, was at Versailles impatiently awaiting the return of his grandchildren.

"I have been uneasy about you, children," he said; "you must be terribly tired."

"It has been the most delightful day in our lives," answered Marie Antoinette, adding gracefully to the old King:—

"The Parisians must be very fond of Your Majesty to have received *us* so warmly."

A few days later she wrote to her mother: "I was present at a scene last Monday which I shall never forget. We had our public entry into Paris, and as for the decorations prepared for us, there was everything one could think of; but, lovely as all these were, they were not the chief attraction. The devotion and enthusiasm of the people were most touching; and notwithstanding the heavy taxes, which are simply crushing them, they

were madly glad to see us. I cannot describe to you, my dear mother, how overwhelmed we were with shouts of joy and signs of affection. How fortunate we are in this country to be able thus easily to gain the goodwill of the people! Nothing can be more worth having; I feel it, and I shall never forget this reception. There was another thing on this delightful occasion which gave me pleasure, and that was the behaviour of the Dauphin, who replied splendidly to all the speeches. He had an eye for all that had been done for him, and appreciated the zeal and kindness of the people, towards whom he was very gracious."

After this triumphal entry into Paris there was some improvement in the position of the Dauphiness, and the intercourse between the young couple was on a better footing. Louis began to feel himself attracted towards his wife, and she began to appreciate his estimable character.

Still, one has rarely heard of such irony of fate as that which cast these two people together, and it would be difficult to meet with characters that offer a greater contrast to each other. It was as though fire and water had been united; not only opposite characters, but different races, tastes, opinions, sympathies, wishes, and feelings were in collision.

Marie Antoinette was warm and lively; Louis cold and apathetic. He was silent; she was talkative. She was elegant and graceful; he was clumsy and heavy. Even his good nature was not satisfactory to Marie Antoinette, for it was rough, repulsive, and vulgar, wanting in a certain delicacy and romance of feeling which she prized. She sought in vain for the husband of her dreams and the future King in this Prince, who had no decided liking for anything but smithy work, and who spent his days with his blacksmith friend Gamain.

The complete neglect of his person was a great cause of annoyance to his young wife, and one day she bitterly reproached him for being so dirty and untidy in his dress. Louis was affronted at first, then he began to weep, and Marie Antoinette was sorry she had offended him. She began to cry, and they became reconciled.

"Do you like me?" the Dauphin once asked her.

"Yes," answered Marie Antoinette, "I do really like you, do not doubt it; but I respect you still more."

The Dauphin felt encouraged by her naïve frankness, and began from that time to be a little more courteous.

Then her position in the inner court circle was more comfortable, for, after some violent domestic quarrels, the elder princesses had apparently ceased to annoy her for a time. Some other members of the Royal Family did their utmost to please the future Queen, and finally Madame du Barry left off complaining and plotting. She could see for herself what others took care to point out to her, that the King was old, and that it might be to her advantage to be on a good footing with the young heirs to the throne.

Louis XV. had long been a stranger in his own kingdom. His mistress had tried in vain to rouse him to travel about and to organize fêtes, but there was nothing left that could please a man who had tasted of all with so much facility.

His health was already shattered by continual debaucheries when he was attacked by small-pox in April, 1774.

The doctor told him that it was time to think of a future life, and on his fear of God being thus aroused Madame du Barry was commanded to leave the Castle.

The news of his dangerous illness was received in Paris with indifference, bordering on pleasure, and ambitious court officials hardly knew whether it was better to cling to the setting, or to turn their thoughts to the rising sun. When it was known that his death was pretty certain the courtiers rushed out of Versailles as though driven by a hurricane, while others hastened towards the Castle to ascertain if the King's condition was worse.

Louis suffered most awfully in the agonies of death. Sometimes he hid his face that he might not see anything, sometimes he pushed away the crucifix that was held before him, screaming out that he was unworthy of the cross of Christ. At other times he gazed anxiously upwards, seized the crucifix, pressed it to his heart, and kissed it with penitence and burning tears.

After taking every precaution against infection, the doctors entered his bedroom with disgust and loathing, while many persons were attacked with the disease simply from passing through the corridor outside.

One courtier, who had opened the door a little way and

looked at the King for two minutes, died, and it was with great difficulty that servants could be induced to enter the room. Some functionary noticed a boy shedding tears, and asked if he was weeping for his master.

"For the King? Not in the least," answered the youth. "I am crying for a poor fellow there who has not had small-pox. He will get it and die."

Both the Dauphin and his wife kept away by command of the King; his daughters and a few servants were alone present at his death. Courtiers and friends left him, but the Princesses Adelaide and Louise were not absent a moment. They encouraged him by their prayers, supported him by their devotion, and attended to him in every detail with the almost certain prospect of infection.

It was in vain that the doctors begged them to go away from this terrible death-bed; and even though the King joined his entreaties to theirs, the princesses would not leave their posts.

A lighted candle was placed in one of the windows of the Castle as a sign that the King was still living.

He breathed his last May 10th, between four and five in the afternoon, when the candle was extinguished, and those outside knew then that the King was dead.

All who could fled from the Castle. The Master of the Ceremonies and a few officials, whose duty it was to see that the sovereign was buried, alone remained.

The body was hastily wrapped in a sheet and thrown into an oak coffin, trebly lined with zinc, to be carried away by two scavengers, the only men who could be induced to undertake the task. In spite of all precautions, such a pestilential smell came from the coffin that the priest who was present was only restrained by his religion from taking to flight.

In the middle of the night the dead body was conveyed in a cart to the royal vault at St. Denis. A few belated revellers from the roadside inns greeted the monarch on his last journey with jokes and drunken allusions.

"His birth," said one wit, "was paid for with paper-money. He gave us war when he grew up, famine when he was old, and the plague when he died."

CHAPTER VII.

Accession to the Throne—Court Ceremonials—The Comtesse de Noailles —Abbé Vermond.

NEVER has a King of France had less ambition than the well-meaning youth of dirty, blacksmith's hands, who ascended the throne on the death of Louis XV. He looked upon greatness as a burden, which only Christian resignation could enable him to bear. When his father died, and he was called Dauphin for the first time, he turned pale and fainted. "Poor France," exclaimed Louis XV., "thou hast an old man for thy King, and a child for thy Dauphin."

Immediately after the death of Louis the whole family met together in the private chapel, and while children and grandchildren were praying for the deceased King an awful storm came on. The rain beat against the windows, the wind extinguished the tapers, and the thunder drowned the voice of the priest.

The Comtesse de Noailles and Abbé Vermond had been the first to enter the apartments of the royal pair after the removal of the old King. They went to greet them as King and Queen of France, but were met with tears and sorrow.

"Oh, God!" they exclaimed, as they both knelt, "we are far too young to govern."

It was a cry from their very hearts, and at the same time a reasonable one, for neither was experienced enough for the high position they were called upon to fill.

Louis, who was barely twenty, had been systematically kept back from any share in the government; and Marie Antoinette, who was not nineteen, had neither liking nor understanding for State affairs.

The court was split up into hostile parties, the exchequer was mismanaged, and respect for royal authority was almost at an end. Difficulties arose on every side, and the cry for reform was universal. The first few days were passed by the people in an enthusiasm of joy. They wrote ironical elegies on the King who had been called "the well-beloved," and sang of him:—

"Ci-gît Louis, le pauvre roi,
Il fut bon, dit-on, mais à quoi?"

At the same time nothing but praises and blessings were showered on Louis XVI. and his charming consort, and on the pedestal of the statue of Henri IV. somebody wrote "Resurrexit" (He has risen again).

"What a nice word," exclaimed the King when he saw it, "if only it were true."

A goldsmith made quite a fortune by selling mourning snuff-boxes with the portrait of Marie Antoinette on the lid, and underneath the words, "Comfort in your sorrow."

After the old King's death the royal couple took up their temporary residence at "La Muette," a little castle in the Bois de Boulogne. From early morning crowds of people collected outside the Castle gates, and shouts of "Long live the King" were heard from six o'clock till sunset. They expected much from the young King, whom they knew to be serious, well-informed, and benevolent, in spite of his shy appearance; and not less was looked for from the young Queen, whom they knew to be so good and pretty.

The plots, which up to the last moment had been seething round the death-bed of Louis XV., were just as subtle, just as mischievous in their nature, when his grandson ascended the throne. Even before the plague-stricken corpse of the old King had been taken away in the dead of that dark night, disputes and struggles had arisen for posts and titles of honour.

The most pressing request of the people was granted, and the day after the King's death his mistress was finally dismissed, while her brother-in-law, Count Jean du Barry, who had been the leading spirit in all the court intrigues, had to fly in haste to England.

But with that inconsiderate haste which is characteristic of Frenchmen, they wished all who had hitherto been in power to be dismissed within four-and-twenty hours.

"I am uneasy about this French enthusiasm," wrote Marie Antoinette to her mother one of the first days after her husband's accession. "It is impossible to satisfy everybody in a country where their natural impatience requires that all shall be seen to in a moment."

Maria Theresa was even less confident.

"I am afraid the good days are over," she said to her Minister, as they were speaking of the change of rulers. And to the young King and Queen she wrote, "You are both very young, my dear children. The burden is heavy; I am anxious, oh! so anxious about you."

When the Empress arranged the marriage of her daughter with the Dauphin she thought she was acting in the interests of her own policy. But she could hardly have selected one less suitable to carry out her wishes, for of all her daughters Marie Antoinette was the one who had the least interest in affairs of State.

Princess Adelaide took small-pox when attending her father's death-bed, but she fought against her sufferings and recovered to carry on her plans.

From the very beginning of her nephew's reign she made it apparent that she meant to lead the young King, and to determine the choice of his ministers.

She talked to Louis in his father's name, and repeated to him the political instructions he had drawn up for the guidance of his son.

While the Queen was taking her daily walk, the Princess arranged a meeting with closed doors, and read aloud to him the list of the men whom his father had wished to be selected as counsellors.

Marquis Maurepas was chosen as head of the ministry, and the appointment was acceptable to the Princess; if less in accordance with the wishes of Marie Antoinette, we must confess that she was in part to blame.

She had allowed her aunts to live under the same roof with the King and herself, although it had been decided from the first that

they should be separated for a time. She had been too timid to dispute Adelaide's appointments, and even weak enough to back up the choice of one or two of the new ministers. It seems as though she had only the one idea of getting d'Aiguillon dismissed, whom she hated and called "that ugly man."

Personally she would certainly have liked to honour Choiseul, who, as we have seen, was her friend and the promoter of her marriage. In the meantime she tried hard to lessen the King's prejudice against him, but all she could obtain was that he might return to court on a short visit.

The young Queen met him in the most friendly, gracious manner.

"I am delighted to see you again, Monsieur Choiseul," she said, "and I shall be very glad if I have brought about your return. It is you who have created my happiness, and it is but fair that you should be a witness of it."

Louis was far from being as amiable; he had not forgotten the ugly libellous stories with which his childhood had been poisoned.

"How fat you have become, Monsieur Choiseul," was the first thing he said to the former minister; "you have lost your hair and become bald."

The duke had not expected much from this visit, and had ordered horses for the return journey before the audience took place.

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The King's household consisted of 1400 officials, while those of the Queen numbered 450, and all bore pompous and ridiculous titles.

The life of the royal pair was not unlike that of prisoners, for watching eyes followed them at every turn, and the staff itself represented warders, under whom the discipline of the Castle was like that of barracks or a jail.

One of the things which annoyed Marie Antoinette when she became Queen was this almost cruel surveillance, a relic of former times. Etiquette met her at every step she took; it hindered her movements, destroyed her pleasures, and interfered with her friendships. In sickness or in health, in her home life or on state occasions, she was ruled by the strictest ceremony. Petty regula-

tions followed her even into the privacy of her bedroom. Every detail in her private life, and the choice of her clothes, even the style of a ribbon bow, was determined by the rigid laws of etiquette.

One of these laws required that the King and Queen should dine in public, waited on by women only.

Another custom was that at any time of the day, unless she was accompanied by her suite, the Queen was to be invariably followed by two ladies in court dress. But she did away with this custom among many others, and adopted the plan of being followed simply by a lacquey.

The lady-in-waiting and maid of honour on duty had the task of dressing the Queen, with the help of a head lady's-maid and two subordinates. The appointed order was thus: the lady-in-waiting held the basin with water while Her Majesty washed her hands, and also gave her her linen, while the maid of honour put her petticoat over her head and handed her her gown. There was the same tedious ceremony at every change of dress, and fixed forms even for night, when the poor Queen had to wear her stays, lace sleeves, and a large triangular white apron in bed.

Even early in the morning, while she drank her chocolate, people were allowed to enter her room, whether she was in bed or not; though the regular large reception did not take place before twelve o'clock.

Princes, officers, court officials, any who liked, came in to pay their respects, and she had to dress in their presence.

If she asked for a glass of water it was brought by a servant on a salver; but he did not present it to the queen, he gave it to the lady-in-waiting who passed it to the maid of honour, and if one of Her Majesty's sisters-in-law was there the glass was given to this princess, when it finally reached the thirsty sovereign. Nothing was handed directly: handkerchief, gloves, anything that she required, was first laid on a salver, which was passed on from hand to hand.

In this way, though surrounded by so many servants, the Queen was often but poorly attended to.

A story told by Madame de Campan in her *Mémoires* gives a picture of this unbearable, tyrannous etiquette.

It happened one winter night that Marie Antoinette stood undressed, waiting for her night-gown.

The lady's-maid was holding it in readiness to put over the Queen's head, when one of the court ladies came in, took off her gloves, and received the garment.

But again there was a knock at the door, which was opened to admit the Duchesse d'Orléans. She also removed her gloves and came forward to take the Queen's night-dress.

The rules of etiquette would not allow the first lady to give it direct to the Duchess; she had to return it to the lady's-maid, who again handed it in correct rotation.

But there was another knock at the door, and this time the Comtesse de Provence came in.

The Duchesse d'Orléans returned the linen to the lady's-maid again, and it finally reached Her Majesty's sister-in-law.

The Queen was standing all this time shrinking with cold, hardly covered, her arms crossed, waiting and shivering. Her sister-in-law saw the situation and how perished she was, and with gloved hands at last put the night-dress on.

Marie Antoinette laughed to hide her impatience, but she could not refrain from murmuring:—

"This etiquette is simply unbearable."

The life of Vienna and Schönbrunn had been like that of a large private family, and the habits and tastes that had been developed at home had certainly not prepared her for the ceremonies of Versailles. Maria Theresa's life of duty and the love and respect of her subjects were far greater supports to the Austrian throne than this etiquette in France, which only excited the well-merited contempt of the people.

We can imagine how a princess of the house of Habsburg, young, frank, and lively, must have chafed with impatience at these customs, which did not leave her a moment to be *herself*, and only allowed her to experience the dignified, wearisome side of her position.

Instead of this etiquette being lessened, it was increased tenfold by the lady now chosen as the Queen's gouvernante.

The Comtesse de Noailles was conscientious, beneficent, and of pure morals; in short, she was a thoroughly estimable person.

But there was nothing pleasant about her, either in person or manner.

Her carriage was stiff, and her whole appearance severe. A smile, not allowed by etiquette, was a grave fault, and a ribbon awry made her quite ill. So great was her love for regularity that her occupations from the beginning of the year to its close never deviated one minute from the prescribed routine.

As she had been gouvernante to Marie Lesczinska, the former Queen of France, it was a matter of course, according to Court regulations, that she should hold the same position under Marie Antoinette.

She had made etiquette a complete study, and the wife of Louis XV. had followed her directions in every particular. She had even fixed the width of the Queen's skirt, to prevent her jumping over the tiniest rill, or making the least movement inconsistent with her dignity.

In her inmost heart Marie Lesczinska thanked God for having raised her to such a high position; but, at the same time, she had not the smallest wish to be reminded that she had only been an obscure Polish princess before she was made Queen of France. This accounted for the importance she attached to every mark of respect, and her expressed wish that the rules of etiquette should be strictly adhered to.

But her grandson's wife thought otherwise. When her gouvernante wearied her with questions on some subjects it often happened that she answered sharply and quickly:—

"Madame, decide it as you like. Do not think that a Queen, an Austrian Archduchess by birth, attaches the same importance to such trifles as a Polish princess, who was promoted to be Queen of France."

But the slight importance that Marie Antoinette attached to ancestral customs, even rejecting many of them, was not without its evil consequences. Apart from ridiculous exaggeration etiquette had its advantages with such a volatile people as the French, who hated to be ruled.

The mystery with which courtiers veiled the royal house helped to preserve a fascinating glamour round the reigning sovereign, which was necessary.

The Comtesse de Noailles ought to have made the Queen understand that her dignity required her to hold fast to the old institutions, and how dangerous it was for a stranger, on whom all eyes were fixed, to introduce new customs into the old court. Finally, she ought to have impressed upon her that etiquette was a sort of bulwark behind which the Queen could entrench herself. But, instead of doing this, she wearied her with endless rebukes. "*Here*," she said, "Your Majesty ought to have bowed in such a manner, *there* in another way. Your Majesty smiled when it was not seemly, nodded when a curtsey was requisite."

This surveillance had annoyed Marie Antoinette as Dauphiness, and as Queen she found it unbearable.

One day, when she was on a donkey, the animal threw her, and courtiers hastened forward in great alarm, while the Queen lay on the grass laughing.

"Run quickly," she exclaimed, "and enquire from Madame Etiquette how a Queen of France ought to behave when thrown by a donkey."

The nickname of "Madame Etiquette" has clung to this sedate lady ever since.

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Maria Theresa advised her daughter to free herself as far as possible from these trammels, while Louis XVI. encouraged his wife to cast off the yoke which he himself could not bear; and, of the same opinion as her mother and her husband, was still a third person, who continually urged her to do away with so much ceremony.

This was her former teacher, Abbé Vermond, a man remarkable for the influence he had acquired over the Queen, which he had exercised without ostentation, but which he had not gained without some calculation.

The Abbé had been teacher at the Sorbonne, and librarian in Mazarin's College, before he had been recommended to the Austrian court.

The son of humble parents, his vanity had been roused and fostered in Vienna, where Maria Theresa allowed him to spend his evenings with the Imperial Family. Up to that time he had

never been in contact with the great of the world, and was simply intoxicated by the reception he met with at the Austrian court. Even in his later life he appreciated nothing more thoroughly than the simple manners of this family circle.

The Abbé was an original in every respect. He despised honours, and only cared to act as the friend and adviser of Marie Antoinette. He treated persons in the highest position as his equals, almost as subordinates, and sometimes received ministers and bishops who wished to interview him, seated in his bath.

In Versailles he was both feared and hated, and when Louis XVI. became King, it was hoped he would be dismissed.

Strenuous efforts were made to influence the weak King, but the Abbé remained, and the Queen's confidence in him continued unshaken.

The King could not bear his wife's private secretary, and never spoke to him.

The following little incident is an index to his treatment of him. On the death of Maria Theresa, Louis sent a message to Vermond requesting him to announce the sad news to the Queen. When he had performed his task the King said:—

"Thank you, Monsieur l'Abbé, for the service you have rendered me."

This was the only time in about twenty years that the King addressed a syllable to his wife's confidential adviser.

In all doubtful cases Marie Antoinette was accustomed to appeal to the Abbé's judgment; but it is probable that he often tried to persuade her to adopt a course of action, the bearing of which she did not understand. He openly strove to make her rebel against the pressure of court etiquette, thus encouraging her in her natural aversion to it. If by chance he came to her just as she was going out, he would say derisively:—

"What is the meaning of this parade of soldiers in the court-yard? Is some general or other about to review the troops? Is it necessary for a Queen who is beloved by her subjects to surround herself with such a strong guard?"

If an attempt was made to dissuade the Queen from taking her morning walk, or to persuade her she must not go out, except in the costume prescribed by etiquette, the Abbé would exclaim:

"Is your Queen always to be in regulation dress? May she never be allowed to breathe fresh air without a regiment of cavalry and infantry, like a general setting out to conquer a fortress? Do let her go in an ordinary gown, and be at liberty to enjoy the morning breeze. It used to be her habit, and it is still that of the Empress, Maria Theresa."

He took similar opportunities to recall the straightforward simplicity of her mother, and to remind her that the Empress was accustomed to go on foot, without either suite or guard. He ridiculed the etiquette of the house of Bourbon, but he did not understand that the maintenance of the Queen's dignity made adherence to traditional customs a necessity.

CHAPTER VIII.

Domestic Discord—Removal to Paris—*Bals d'opéra*—Marie Antoinette's Love of Ridicule.

Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette met with opposition and jealousy immediately on their accession to the throne. The Comte and Comtesse de Provence and the Comte and Comtesse d'Artois began by refusing to wait upon the King and Queen every morning, according to the custom of the previous reign.

Louis, who was kindness itself, did not like his brothers to call him "Your Majesty," and Marie Antoinette, who was just as good-natured, at times far too easy, allowed the same liberty. The Empress of Austria disapproved of their conduct. "One must keep one's place," she wrote to her daughter, "and understand how to play one's own part, which makes life easier for one's self and others. It is right to be obliging and considerate, but avoid confidences and unnecessary talking, which only cause dissension."

On public occasions, when the Royal Family were assembled, there was apparently such an equality between the King and his brothers, that strangers had often some difficulty in determining which was the ruler.

The Comte d'Artois especially exhibited such striking familiarity as to astonish all who saw him. He jostled his eldest brother, trod on his heels, and continually sought for an opportunity to contradict him. The Comte de Provence was more cautious, and did not put himself forward; but he was less honest, and soon became one of Marie Antoinette's secret enemies.

We know that the Princess Adelaide was full of gall and bitterness, and her sister Louise, who had left her convent in St. Denis to pry into court affairs, was not more kindly disposed towards the Queen, while the Comtesse de Provence never let go an opportunity of speaking against her sister-in-law.

But on her side Marie Antoinette let the two Savoy princesses understand that her double superiority, as an Archduchess of Austria and Queen of France, was very clear. They replied, showing but little good breeding, that the court of Turin was quite on an equality with that of Vienna, which caused many bitter words, now from one side, now from the other.

The Queen, who was fond of pleasure and extremely imprudent, laid herself open to criticism far more than her sisters-in-law did; while, thanks to their zealous care and that of her aunts, the net of scandal was drawn ever more and more tightly around her from the most opposite quarters.

The last years of the reign of Louis XV. had been dull ones. Withheld from joining in any court amusements on account of her aversion to the King's mistress, living among peevish, capricious, disappointed aunts, on the one hand, and a gouvernante on the other who, at the least step that she took, preached to her about the stringent laws of etiquette, the poor Queen had been obliged to fight against her natural liveliness and youthful longing for excitement.

Coming to the throne at such an early age, with liberty to do as she liked, her complex nature seems to have undergone a complete change, and qualities, which had hardly been suspected before, suddenly burst into life. After having been condemned for five years to the dulness of pure routine, she now seemed to be famished, simply hungry for pleasure; and unfortunately there were plenty at court who shared her tastes.

Marie Antoinette was fond of Paris, and one of her greatest delights was to visit the theatres, so that she often drove to the capital. The people were at first pleased at her frequent visits, but when she began to attend private, or masked balls, they thought it unsuited to a queen.

It is true that the so-called *bals d'opéra* were patronized by the best society, also that the King allowed her to attend them, although he himself accompanied her but once. She nearly always went with her brother-in-law alone, wearing a riding habit or some simple domino, which commanded no respect and yet excited curiosity. She danced at these balls till daylight, and seldom returned to Versailles before seven o'clock in the morning.

She thus naturally exposed herself to malicious criticism, and even to direct accusation.

One evening a mask took the liberty of reproaching her for neglecting her wifely duties.

"A good wife," he said, "ought to stay at home with her husband, and not run about to balls by herself."

Stories were soon afloat that she was leading an irregular life. At first the people did not believe this; but the court, which delighted in scandal, and lived far too heedless a life to believe in the virtue of others, accepted them with avidity.

Hints and allusions at last reached the ears of the King, whose hasty temper was roused, and he overwhelmed his wife with violent reproaches. It is probable that she was not half so thoughtless as she was said to be. Posterity can distinguish between the stories in circulation, some of which were untrue and some exaggerated.

The eagerness and enthusiasm with which she rushed into pleasures which were not so disreputable as some have made them out to be, but none the less dangerous, served, however, to place a weapon against her in the hands of her contemporaries, and Maria Theresa was right when she said:—

"Another half-dozen years were needed to strengthen the Queen in the exercise of those more serious tastes which had developed and were making progress during the last few months that she was Dauphiness. This premature accession to authority is destroying a good beginning."

With inexplicable carelessness, Marie Antoinette did not even notice that she was causing scandal, nor conceive that she was providing the canvas on which gossips and libellers would paint a false picture of her life. She looked upon the *bals d'opéra* merely as an innocent pleasure, which could never have any consequences, and yet there is not the slightest doubt that the attendance at them proved highly prejudicial to her. Full of spirits she would go about and talk to all with a freedom from constraint which was irreconcilable with her dignity, and had the effect of cold water on the ardent feelings of her people. The Queen did not seem to remember her high position, which made it not unnatural that others should begin to overlook it too. "Always more conscious of her sex than of her rank," says one of her contem-

poraries, "she forgot that she was born to live and die on a real throne. She was too eager to enjoy the imaginary and fleeting power that pretty women can get at any time, and which creates them queens but for a day."

First among the many reproaches the court addressed to Marie Antoinette was her want of grief on the death of Louis XV. We know that as Dauphiness she had caused offence on account of her love of ridicule. She had even given nicknames to the respectable elderly ladies at court, and called them "bundles," "centuries," "stand-up collars," etc.

A few days after their grandfather's funeral, the young King and Queen received visits of condolence from all in authority, and on this very first occasion Marie Antoinette made herself enemies among the oldest nobility.

While receiving some of these sympathizing callers, Marie Antoinette began to laugh at the antiquated dress of several noble ladies, who had come from aristocratic convents or castles all over the kingdom. They could not tolerate this laughter, and returned full of wrath to their homes, where they related how Marie Antoinette had made game of estimable persons who had hastened to do her homage, adding that she had ignored all the rules of good breeding, and that none of those whom she had ridiculed would care to show themselves at her court again.

This ill-timed merriment gave occasion for the first libellous song against her, which began thus :—

> "Petite reine de vingt ans,
> Vous qui traitez si mal les gens,
> Vous repasserez la Bavière."

It is evident from these lines that it was the secret wish of her enemies to bring about a divorce, and send her back to the land from whence she came.

A little later some other such songs were published, because the Queen was accused of having said that she could not understand how anybody turned thirty could appear at court, and because she preferred to meet at balls gentlemen who danced well, rather than those who were clumsy.

The young Queen was by no means happy in her exalted position, and felt herself more a stranger than ever. Ceremonious

receptions wearied her to such a degree that at last, even on the most solemn occasions, she paid no heed to people who from their rank, importance, or services were entitled to receive attention from her.

The more serious members of the court soon turned against her, and fresh disparaging remarks about her life were daily repeated.

She saw herself obliged to form a clique of her own, but in this she was sadly wanting in reserve and judgment. She would send witty, joking messages to women who were not cheerful, and to men who were neither good-looking nor young. She surrounded herself with courtiers whose lives were an open scandal, and with women notorious for their irregular conduct. Her adviser was not the King, whose peculiarities caused her such constant amusement, but the Comte d'Artois, who accompanied her early and late, on horseback or in her carriage.

Every detail of her private life was distorted by those around her and eagerly circulated, which naturally served to increase the difficulties of her position.

Her opponents found a staunch ally in the Comtesse de Marsan, the King's former governess, whose opinion carried weight on account of the esteem in which she was held, and the post she had formerly filled. In the eyes of the Countess the conduct of Marie Antoinette was simply that of a courtesan, whose light airy dress reminded the elder ladies of some theatre princess trying to arouse the passions of her audience.

If the Queen looked up, Madame de Marsan criticised her expression as that of a consummate coquette; if she spoke in her natural cheerful way, it was nothing but empty chatter; if there was a sympathizing look on her face the Countess thought she was insufferable, pretending to understand everything; if she laughed joyously it was affected merriment.*

The old lady suspected and maligned her at every turn. Marie Antoinette retaliated with jeers, and forgot that Madame de Marsan had brought up her husband and his brothers and sisters, that she was the intimate friend of her aunts, and a person of unbounded influence at her court.

* *Supplément historique et essentiel à l'état nominatif des pensions*, 1789.

CHAPTER IX.

Marie Antoinette's Beauty—The Queen's Apartments in Versailles—Mademoiselle Bertin, the Milliner—The Absurdities of Fashion.

It is quite evident from the last chapter that Marie Antoinette was wanting in many qualities essential to a queen. She possessed all outward advantages in the highest degree, for she was Queen of France and Queen in the realm of beauty.

She had been attractive as Dauphiness, but by no means lovely, and Madame du Barry had scornfully called her "the little red-haired thing" the first time she saw her. But, on the other hand, she fascinated some people by her bright smile and ruddy lips, by the undeveloped figure of her fifteen years, her charming profile, and her large, speaking eyes, which shone with laughter, though they could also flash with scorn or anger.

The five years that intervened between her arrival and the death of Louis XV. had marvellously developed her personal appearance, and on her accession to the throne she united the beauty of the woman to the dignity of the queen.

If she had belonged to the very lowest stratum of society, her appearance would have attracted the attention of all. It is therefore easy to understand the enthusiasm she excited, if we remember that she was the wife of a King and the daughter of an Emperor. When she entered a room a long-continued murmur of admiration greeted her, and at the theatre every eye-glass was at once directed towards the Queen. She inspired some men with feelings that almost bordered on madness.

Madame Vigée Le Brun, who painted her portrait in 1779, describes her appearance at this time:—

"The Queen," she says, "stood in the glory of youth and beauty; she was twenty-five years old, tall, remarkably well-made,

plump, without being stout. Her arms were especially beautiful, her hands small and well-shaped, and she had pretty feet.

"No woman in France had a better walk. She carried her head high, with such dignity, that as she stood surrounded by her court, one glance was sufficient to recognize the ruler. But at the same time this regal bearing in no way affected the kindness and benevolence of her whole being." The artist continues:—

"I saw the Queen in full gala dress (in Fontainebleau), and adorned as she was with diamonds, she shone like the sun. Her stately head and lovely Greek neck gave her the appearance of a goddess surrounded by her nymphs. During the first interview I had with the Queen after her journey, I allowed myself to speak of my impressions, and to tell her how the pose of her head increased the nobility of her appearance. She replied jokingly:—

"'If I were not a Queen, people would say that I look impudent, would they not?'"

One of her pages, Count Tilly, says: "Even in the moments when she thought only of herself as a pretty woman, she was Queen of France. Never did anyone bow more gracefully, greeting some ten people with one single bend. While offering a stool to other women, one is tempted to place the throne itself for her."

Madame Vigée Le Brun most admired her head; Count Tilly is especially struck with her beautiful eyes. He says: "Firmness, dislike, and tenderness were expressed by turns more distinctly in her look than in any other woman I have ever seen."

The young royal pair spent the summer after the death of Louis XV. at Choisy, la Muette, Marly, and Compiègne, and returned with the whole court to Versailles in the beginning of September. The suite of apartments occupied by Louis as Dauphin was assigned to the Comte de Provence, and the room in which Louis XV. died became the bedroom of the new King until October 6th, 1789.

The Queen retained the same rooms she had had as Dauphiness, which were those of former Queens of France, and which Imbert de Saint-Amand has described in his work, *Les Femmes de Versailles*:—

"We ascend a marble staircase," he says, "and on the first floor we find a door, by which we enter into the Queen's apartments.

The first room is reserved for her bodyguard, and the adjoining one is called either 'the Queen's ante-chamber' or the 'large dining hall,' in which the King and Queen dine in public, though for the latter it is a mere pretence, as she really has her meal later on in her private room. The King, on the contrary, eats his dinner with a voracious appetite.

"In this same hall solemn banquets on the occasion of a royal marriage are given. There is music during the feast, and the magnificent crown porcelain is used. Ladies of the highest rank are present as companions to the royal pair, but they do not dine. Princesses and duchesses sit on low stools or chairs round the table, but all other ladies stand.

"In the next room the Queen holds her great receptions, seated on a daïs under a canopy, and distinguished ladies and gentlemen are presented to her.

"Adjoining this is her bedroom, in which, before her time, fifteen princes and princesses first saw the light, two dauphinesses, and two queens had died; and here, in due course, all her own children were born.

"In a recess of this room there was an almost invisible door, which led into a narrow corridor, called 'The King's Way.' This passage led to the former room of Louis XIV., the council chamber, and the King's bedroom, through which Marie Antoinette fled from her murderers the morning of October 6th, 1789.

"This suite of the Queen's larger rooms terminates in the magnificent Salle de Paix, which opens on to the mirror galleries."

But the Queen spent very little of her time in these state apartments; she preferred four modest, ill-lighted rooms, which she had chosen exclusively for her private use, consisting of a boudoir, two libraries, and a vestibule, which led into her bedroom.

Before her accession to the throne, Marie Antoinette had been comparatively shabby in her dress, and had been accustomed to pay any visits in the morning in a thin light gown, which, as we noticed in a previous chapter, had displeased the French princesses, who wore their stiff court dress from early morning until they went to bed.

A dressmaker, the renowned Mademoiselle Bertin, completely changed the taste of the Queen in this respect.

She was the first member of the burgher class who had the honour of entering the King's palace, and it was she who roused and encouraged the Queen's extravagant wastefulness in dress.

The Duchesse de Chartres—later Duchesse D'Orléans—first mentioned her, and Marie Antoinette thought she would like to consult her on the subject of her wardrobe; but it was not till months after the first interview that she ventured to receive her, except in her little boudoir.

Mademoiselle Bertin, who was peremptory and exacting, gained a strong influence over the Queen, and treated her with great familiarity, giving even a tone of command to her advice on fashions.

"She is my 'costume minister,' said Marie Antoinette of her dressmaker, "and helps to keep intriguers away from me."

This good-natured remark made Mademoiselle Bertin so conceited, that she really imagined her post to be as important as that of a royal counsellor.

"I will show you some of the last designs the Queen and I have arranged together," she said to a lady who had come to order a gown from her.

In a former chapter we saw some of the rules respecting the dressing of the Queen which were adhered to for a long time, but when Mademoiselle Bertin became her directress she did away with many of the customs which obliged her royal mistress to dress, as it were, in public. People continued to enter her bedroom, but she withdrew with a bow, and Mademoiselle Bertin was the only person admitted to the little room, where she assisted her at her toilet. When it was nearly completed, the Queen went into the former dressing-room, where she received all who approached her with petitions, and at the same time placed herself in the hands of the court hairdresser.

Mademoiselle Bertin is to blame for the extravagant styles that came into vogue when Marie Antoinette and her ladies wore perfect towers of gauze, flowers, and feathers, mixed among crimped hair, false curls, and plaits.

The most incredible things were to be seen on the head, and

the designs, which were often from thirty to forty inches in height, represented whole biographies, a botanical garden, or mythological pictures and idylls; in short, the most remarkable conceptions.

One lady wore a meadow, with two little lambs, a shepherd, a brook, a windmill, and other things. Another had a head-dress that represented the four quarters of the globe, together with the sun, moon, and stars. On the head of a third a parasol was arranged, which opened and closed according to sunshine and shade. A fourth wore a bird made of diamonds, with wings outspread over a full-blown rose.

Fresh styles were invented for every occasion. The Duchesse de Chartres appeared at a court ball with a man-of-war in full sail on her head, while another evening her hairdresser allegorically represented her little son, Louis Philippe, sleeping in the lap of his nurse.

The court friseur Léonard called himself "Académicien de coiffures et de modes," and as all the grand ladies wished to have their hair dressed by him, they were often obliged to put themselves in his hands the evening, or even the morning, before a fête, on which occasions they had to sit upright on a chair all night, in order not to disarrange his splendid works of art.

These erections were most inconvenient either for walking or driving, and even doors had to be made higher to allow ladies to pass through them. Carriages were too low, and the occupants had to crouch or drive with their heads out of the window; others even knelt—all to take care of their wonderful headgear.

Those who went on foot were liable to be caught by bushes and boughs, like the authoress Madame de Genlis, who shared the fate of Absalom when on a visit to Voltaire at Fernay. Whilst hastening forward to greet the great man she was caught by her hair, which remained hanging to a bough.

If at a ball, it was impossible to walk a step without touching a lamp or a chandelier; while at the theatres angry words, and even blows, were exchanged about these hair scaffoldings, which quite hid the stage and the actors. Attacks were made on the fashions in the comic papers of the day, but they produced no effect. One picture represented an inconsolable widow ordering

an elegant coffin made of hair, and it is evident that many caricaturists distinctly copied the features of the Queen in their illustrations.

Mademoiselle Bertin was content with no half measures, and every month, sometimes every week, she persuaded Léonard to increase the height of his coiffures.

One day when Marie Antoinette entered her dressing-room a servant appeared with a wooden stool, the use of which she did not understand.

"What is that for?" she asked of her maid.

The hairdresser came forward, bowed, and represented humbly to Her Majesty that it was impossible for him to fasten her hair right up to the top without the help of a ladder!

The Queen presented her mother with a picture which represented her with this extravagant erection, adorned with a feather more than a foot in length.

Maria Theresa returned the portrait with the following words: "My daughter! I am sending back the present you have made me. There must be some mistake, as I did not receive the likeness of the Queen of France, but of an actress. I therefore return the picture, hoping to receive the correct one from you."

Her mother's remarks about her dress produced but little impression on the young Queen. She looked upon them merely as outbursts of bad temper, the result of increasing ill-health.

Changes of fashion with respect to colours were as frequent and exaggerated as the styles of dressing the hair.

One day the Queen appeared in a pale yellow gown. "That is the shade of Her Majesty's hair," said the Comte de Provence, and it immediately became fashionable at court. Locks of her hair were sent to the silk manufacturers in Lyons, who copied it exactly in their stuffs and ribbons.

Another day she wore a dark brown gown. "That colour reminds one of a flea," exclaimed the King. And fleas began to play an important part in the realm of fashion. Materials were made which were called "old flea," "young flea," "flea stomach," "flea thigh," and "flea back."

"Let me instruct you," said a courtier to a stranger who wished to gain admittance to the Palace: "Wear a puce coat and waist-

coat, and walk in with assurance. At the present time nothing further is needed for success."

Side by side with all this extravagance and exaggeration there was a simulation of straitened means. Courtiers who appeared one day in gold-embroidered velvet suits were seen on the next occasion in plain burgher clothes. Ladies in fashionable society dressed one day in the glories of the Queen of Sheba, and imitated the costume of a peasant the next.

Marie Antoinette took a lively interest in all questions of fashion, and there were times when she could talk of nothing but dress and ornament. The Comtesse de la Marck, who described the French court at this period, says of her:—

"The Queen goes incessantly to the opera and theatres, gets into debt, drives from one thing to another, bedizens herself with finery and feathers, and makes a fool of herself in every possible way."

The example which she set had a bad effect on all ranks. Women belonging to the most different strata of society copied her, and strove to have the same style of hair-dressing, the same feathers, flowers, and wreaths. Their expenses were thus considerably increased. Husbands and fathers complained, many rushed into debt, and domestic quarrels became frequent; estrangement and discord arose between couples who had been living comfortably together, but who now agreed to separate; and public opinion pointed to Marie Antoinette as the one who was ruining her sex by her bad example.

CHAPTER X.

Marie Antoinette's Friendships—La Princesse de Lamballe—La Princesse de Guéménée—La Comtesse de Polignac.

ALL through life Marie Antoinette had a weakness for the friendship of pretty women, who could easily win her heart and exercise great influence over her. Her lively temperament and transient emotions made her constantly long for something new and surprising. Not without reason has it been said that before her intimacy with the Comtesse de Polignac she did not realize what friendship can be.

As soon as a new star arose in her circle, it was not the least effort to her to abandon those whom the previous day she had simply overwhelmed with expressions of devotion and marks of kindness. And while this new friend was basking in the light of her favour, her predecessor was exposed to the discomfort and bitterness consequent on her loss of position.

As Dauphiness, Marie Antoinette had been attracted for a short time by the Duchesse de Picquiny, the youngest lady then at court, whose facility for caricaturing her elders had encouraged the love of ridicule of the Dauphiness, and created innumerable enemies for her when she became Queen. Her intimacy with the Duchess soon turned to coolness, which was followed by complete indifference.

The Dauphiness liked to be amused, so she changed her friends, and Madame de Saint-Mégrin took the place of the Duchesse de Picquiny.

After her came Madame de Cossé, who was replaced by the Marquise de Langeac.

The year before the death of Louis XV. a young actress, Mademoiselle Rancourt, was creating some sensation in France,

and the Dauphiness became much interested in her personally, besides admiring her unusual talent. She invited her to Versailles, flattered her, paid her debts, and overwhelmed her with tokens of affection.

The Marquise de Langeac, who at that time was first in favour with Marie Antoinette, became simply inflamed with jealousy at the sight of this devotion to Mademoiselle Rancourt. But her tears and reproaches only served to bring about more quickly her own dismissal, while all difference of rank and position appeared to be forgotten between the Dauphiness and this "priestess of Thalia."

At a *soirée* given by the Comtesse de Noailles, the Princesse de Lamballe was introduced to the future Queen, who no sooner caught sight of this graceful appearance than all her former friendships seemed to pale.

Marie Thérèse Louise de Savoie-Carignan was born at Turin, September 8th, 1749, and was the daughter of Prince Louis Victor de Carignan and the Princess Christina Henrietta of Hessen-Rheinfeldt-Rothenburg. At the age of seventeen she had been brought to France in order to marry Prince Lamballe, the only son of the Duc de Penthièvre, so highly renowned for his benevolence and his noble character. The union had proved a short and unhappy one. Under the bad influence of his brother-in-law, the Duc de Chartres, the Prince had taken to evil courses soon after his marriage, and died in a year from the consequences of his licentious living.

His widow was one of the most attractive women at the French court, and has been called "spring clothed in ermine," and "the rose in the snow."

Innumerable reports have been invented and circulated to defame all other women who lived at the court of Marie Antoinette, but not a cloud has ever rested on the reputation of this friend, not an enemy has dared to cast a doubt on her purity.

In her first grief on the death of her husband she went into a convent, but afterwards lived with her father-in-law, who loved her as his own child.

On her arrival at Versailles to take part in some festivity her

beauty attracted universal admiration. Louis XV. was infatuated by her, while Madame du Barry and her party began to fear that Princesse Lamballe would become Queen of France, and the mistress's reign would be over.

In the meantime she was by no means attracted by the old King. The sorrows of her youth had made her melancholy, and she preferred to live in retirement away from the excitement of the world.

Her troubles and her unhappy marriage made her doubly interesting in the eyes of the Dauphiness. Everything seemed to draw them together, their age, their beauty, which they mutually admired, and their high birth, of which they were both proud. The devotion of the Dauphiness excited confidence, which developed into intimacy. At the close of the reign of Louis XV. they were constantly together, and the accession of Marie Antoinette to the throne only strengthened the bond between them.

The friendship of the Princess could not be without an undercurrent of seriousness, and she gave to the young Queen the tenderness that her husband had disdained, and which had since lain hidden beneath her outward coldness. The feelings she had towards her were blended with respect, gratitude, admiration, and the warmest devotion. Even the contrasts in their characters became a point of union between these two. The Queen's liveliness roused the Princess from melancholy, while her calmness gave repose to the Queen's restlessness.

Marie Antoinette had scarcely become Queen before she expressed the wish to attach her friend to the court, but the high birth of the Princess hindered her from accepting the post of gouvernante. The position of intendante was the only one compatible with her rank.

The Duc de Bourbon's daughter, the Princesse de Clermont, had held this office under the former Queen of France, but on her death in 1741 it had ceased to exist, and no steps had been taken to renew it.

The displeasure was universal when it was rumoured that Marie Antoinette wished the appointment to be recognized again, and in favour of Madame de Lamballe, a foreigner.

The King would not hear of it, and the Minister of Finance at the time, Turgot, was strongly against it.

But at last they both yielded to the Queen's repeated entreaties, and she wrote to Count Rosenberg: "You cannot picture to yourself how happy I am; I am giving pleasure to my friend, and making myself even still more happy."

The appointment was made in September, 1775, when the Princesse de Lamballe was twenty-six. It raised a perfect storm at court, and dissatisfaction was expressed on all sides.

Madame de Cossé—the former friend—tendered her resignation, which was accepted. Several other ladies said they would not be under the intendante, and refused her obedience. The Comtesse de Noailles had neither forgotten the nickname of "Madame Etiquette," nor forgiven the ridicule cast by the Queen on all the old customs: she sought for dismissal from her duties in the same moment that Madame de Lamballe entered upon hers, and retired full of bitterness against her royal mistress, which she nursed into perfect hatred.

The Princesse de Lamballe was straightforward, but somewhat narrow-minded, and though we must admire the constancy which led her to martyrdom, it cannot be denied that she had failings which have clung to her memory.

Through the Queen's influence she obtained for her brother, the Prince de Carignan, the command of an infantry regiment with an annual pay of 30,000 francs, while she insisted on 150,000 francs for herself as intendante. It was these exactions that roused the indignation of the court, and not without good cause.

But, on the other hand, it must be confessed that it was never her intention to spend this money on herself, and many complaints were unjust, as nearly all of it went to relieve urgent distress. Her statue-like beauty seemed to warm into life, and she became genial and responsive on seeing misery, and no sufferer ever appealed to her in vain.

Marie Antoinette used to say:—

"How happy are the needy that come to you; and it is quite impossible for me to refuse anything you ask for, dear friend. Is it for the sake of the poor you stay with me?"

The Princess was strictly ceremonious, and fulfilled her court duties with accuracy; but if she thought that her office was but reluctantly recognized by some people, she clung all the more tenaciously to the privileges to which she considered herself entitled.

Her royal friend, who hated all questions of ceremony, had, on her appointment, indefinitely left both duties and prerogatives to her discretion, which naturally caused discord between the Princess and the other ladies, so that every moment brought fresh difficulties on the subject of etiquette, which resulted in imperfect service and universal discontent.

The Queen had continually to hear complaints or settle disputes; she became angry with her friend, and gradually cooled in her devotion towards her. Though she did not altogether neglect her, she flitted from one friendship to another as before.

But these new confidantes, who amused her for a time, were so eager to profit by her royal favour that she soon found out that the Princesse de Lamballe was her best and truest friend. "She is the only woman I know," she said, "who never bears a grudge; neither hatred nor jealousy is to be found in her."

There is one friend of this period deserving of slight notice, namely, the Princesse de Guéménée, niece of the Comtesse de Marsan, who began her court career as governess to the Princess Elizabeth.

Prince Guéménée and his wife led an extremely gay life, and the Queen enjoyed spending her evenings with them.

Their circle consisted entirely of young people, who caused the greatest scandal by their unseemly behaviour. They played high, and their conversation was indecent. Plays were acted which, in the words of a contemporary, "could only be represented before princes and disreputable women." The whole tone of the house was so immoral that on one occasion most of the ladies who had been invited felt themselves obliged to withdraw. But the Queen remained, and for a year she went nearly every evening to Madame de Guéménée's house, where she enjoyed herself thoroughly in society which others found scandalous.

The King did not share her taste, and one evening when his wife had persuaded him to accompany her, he became seriously

angry at the liberty that had been taken to invite him to such an entertainment. It was much more love of pleasure than admiration of her hostess, that induced Marie Antoinette to frequent her parties; but it was hearty affection that bound her to her next friend, the Comtesse de Polignac.

The presence of this lady was disastrous to the Queen, but very profitable to herself and every member of her family.

When the Princesse de Lamballe had been appointed intendante, and Madame de Noailles had withdrawn from her office, several changes had taken place in the Queen's suite, among which was the choice of Diana de Polignac as court reader.

Marie Antoinette treated her at first with great coolness, and rightly considered her selfish and coquettish. But in spite of this, Diana contrived to gain admittance to the Queen's small evening parties, where she made herself feared by her love of ridicule. It was she who introduced her sister-in-law to the Queen.

Gabrielle Zolande Claudine Martine Polastron was born in 1749, and married in 1767 Count Julius Polignac, a poor noble of Auvergne.

Before her appearance at Versailles, she had led a very retired life in the country, where she had looked for happiness simply as a good housewife, and we gather that nothing was farther from her thoughts than becoming a parasite in a king's palace.

The Queen was at once attracted by the Comtesse Polignac, and honoured her with marked attention.

She thought she had at last found what she had been seeking for so long, a heart that could beat in unison with her own, and give her the full sympathy for which she was craving.

She expressed surprise at not having met her before; to this the Comtesse replied that as she and her husband were not wealthy, they were unable to frequent the court. The reply was naïve, but at the same time clever. Her captivating manners had gained her favour, and now her poverty was likely to increase her attraction; indeed, it seemed to the Queen that fate had been unjust to the couple, and that it was her duty to make them amends.

It is said that at first neither the Comte nor the Comtesse was

especially ambitious, but it is certain that Julius Polignac was without either prospects or fortune when his wife attracted the notice of the Queen.

As in the case of Madame de Lamballe a few years earlier, Marie Antoinette wished to attach this new friend also to her court. A post as lady-in-waiting was vacant, but this could not be given to a quite young stranger without offending against all custom and tradition. Besides, the Comtesse declared that she did not wish for any appointment.

So Marie Antoinette began by simply making her a friend. She and her husband removed to Versailles, where they lived at the Queen's expense, at first very modestly. But in the course of a year their position was materially altered, and favours of every kind were showered upon them, while enormous sums of money were literally squandered for their benefit, in proportion to which the amount given to the Princesse de Lamballe was as nothing.

To begin with, Polignac and his wife had 400,000 francs to pay their debts, then 800,000 francs as a portion for their daughter, twelve years old, the future Duchesse de Gramont.

But this was not enough. They demanded the control of a royal estate bringing in an income of 100,000 francs and the supervision of the whole postal system, which was worth a considerable sum, and they got both!

It is not to be wondered at that people began to look upon these concessions as extravagant, and the demands of the Polignac family as preposterous.

The Comtesse was neither brilliant nor intellectual, she was simply a woman of the world. Obliging and full of tact, of a pleasant appearance, endowed with a presence of mind which never left her in the most trying moments, it is probable that she hid under apparent simplicity far more shrewdness and persistency than people gave her credit for.

Of a naturally calm, not to say apathetic nature, accustomed to a free and peaceful life in the society of her family and friends, she must often have wearied of Marie Antoinette's overpowering affection. Indeed, we may believe that in her heart she never cared for her position of Queen's darling, and that she would have

been thankful to be released, if she and her relations had not been deriving such immense advantage from it.

Marie Antoinette did not find in her either devotion equivalent to her own feelings or gratitude at all in proportion to her great generosity.

If the Comtesse had been left to herself her influence would not have been so dangerous, she would probably have been content with her lucrative post and spent her income on her husband and relations. But no sooner was it seen at court from what quarter the wind was blowing, than crowds of applicants of both sexes gathered round the new favourite to implore her help and the exercise of her influence on their behalf.

She was incessantly receiving fresh favours, and although she pretended to wish for nothing, she artfully led the Queen to offer her more and more, from which her friends benefited to a degree which is almost incredible.

This partiality of Marie Antoinette for Madame de Polignac did not at first appreciably affect her behaviour towards the Princesse de Lamballe, who probably hoped that a devotion which had arisen so suddenly would cease in the same manner as so many of the Queen's former friendships had done.

But this violent attachment began to arouse jealousy among the old nobility, and when Madame de Lamballe saw that Marie Antoinette's enemies were making use of it as a weapon against her, she considered it her duty to warn her of the dangers to which she was exposing herself.

This was more than sufficient to arouse the enmity of the Countess against Madame de Lamballe, the issue of which it was not difficult to foresee.

The outspoken Princess was powerless; her adversary had all the charm of novelty, and was, moreover, upheld by her family, and friends well experienced in court politics.

Madame de Lamballe was one of the best of women in the highest circle of French society, but she was not looked upon as a woman of strong character, or as capable of any decisive action. She was thought insignificant and wanting in intellectual tastes—it certainly cannot be denied that she soon became painfully wearisome as a companion.

Madame de Genlis, who often met her at the house of the Duc d'Orléans, is severe in her judgment of her. She declared that she had no intelligence, and was incapable of sustaining a conversation; also, that it was tiresome to be with her, on account of the nervous fainting fits to which she was subject.

The Comtesse de Polignac and her adherents took advantage of the Princess's weakness, and spoke continually of her exactions, forgetting their own exorbitant claims. They blamed her jealousy and her frankness, which they called stupidity. At first the Queen tried to reconcile the rivals, who both besieged her with complaints, but by degrees she became very tired of Madame de Lamballe, and gradually, but insensibly, withdrew more and more from her society.

The Polignac family ridiculed the Princess and encouraged the Queen to laugh at her former friend, who, after a time, was not merely neglected, but in real disgrace with Her Majesty.

Madame de Lamballe may not have been a clever woman, but she had known adversity in her younger days, and was too proud to let the world see what she was suffering now. She could not immediately withdraw from the duties of her high position, but she appeared less and less frequently, and at length finally withdrew from court.

She acted wisely, for she had lost the Queen's favour, and nobody sought to retain her. She returned to her father-in-law and shared his lonely life until, danger threatening, the Queen induced her to return to Versailles.

Her devotion had not been without exactions; but when nearly everybody left Marie Antoinette, she remained faithful, loving, and giving far more than she herself received.

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The Comtesse de Polignac had gained her end when her adversary quietly withdrew.

The Queen was constant in her attachment to her new friend at all hours and on every possible occasion.

Instead of dining in public with the King, according to old court custom, she had dinner with the Countess, except on Sundays. Nothing was allowed to disturb her intercourse with

her, the lady-in-waiting was dismissed, and nobody was permitted to enter the room in which the Queen and Madame de Polignac were together. In the evening she would take her arm and walk about with her. When the Countess was in the country, the Queen wrote to her constantly with all the gossip of Versailles. If she was ill, the Queen went to see her and overwhelmed her with attentions.

The Countess had the measles; the Queen took the complaint from her. The Countess was expecting her confinement, and the whole court had to remove to Marly that the Queen might be near her. In short, the Countess was the only person about whom it was impossible to open Marie Antoinette's eyes, though she could generally judge clearly, often severely, of those about her; but she would not suffer the least disparaging word to be uttered about this friend.

But this passionate attachment fostered all the Queen's least amiable qualities.

The Polignac entertainments could not be select on account of the large numbers that visited at the house. Then the reckless, wanton life that was led there injured the reputation of the Countess, as well as that of the Queen, who continually assisted her friend to invent new pleasures.

Marie Antoinette was lively, bright, and fond of amusement. She exposed herself to reports without meaning it in the least, and her daily visit to the Countess at last became a real necessity, as well as a habit. Goncourt has drastically observed:—

"All Marie Antoinette's efforts tended to raise Madame de Polignac to the Queen's level, and to lower the Queen to that of Madame de Polignac."

The warmest attachment, especially among the great, often degenerates into indifference. It was known that the Princesse de Lamballe had not been less dear to the Queen, and yet the favour she enjoyed melted like dew before the sun. Madame Polignac's friends had noticed this and reflected; they therefore hastened as one man to gather warmth from the bright rays in which she was basking. A perfect shower of favours were distributed among the Polignac family. The father-in-law of the Countess, quite an ordinary man in every respect, was chosen as

envoy in Switzerland, a much-coveted post, for which there were many more suitable candidates.

Diana de Polignac was appointed governess to the Princess Elizabeth; Count Julius was made Master of the Horse, when his income was increased by 80,000 francs. The title of duke was granted to him and to his heirs, and it was generally believed that husband and wife together were in the receipt of half a million francs. "There are few examples in history," says Count Mercy-Argenteau on this subject, "where in so short a time royal favour has done so much for a single family." Those outside the circle considered such distinction excessive, while the familiarity between the Queen and her subjects was unheard of at the court of France. Versailles and Paris spoke out bitterly, and let it be clearly understood how completely they disapproved of this unsuitable and exaggerated intimacy.

The Queen and the Countess were made the subject for caricatures, obscene songs, and libellous publications.

Marie Antoinette's real friends saw the storm that was coming on, and tried to open her eyes on the subject of this undesirable friendship that was patent to all around. The Princesse de Lamballe had been the first to use her influence, but she only lost the Queen's affection. Abbé Vermond followed in her footsteps, but the Queen did not appear to understand him, and always avoided any serious conversation about her intercourse with the Countess.

The Abbé left the court, only to return, however, after a short absence, to touch again, with the greatest solicitude, on the painful subject.

CHAPTER XI.

Trianon.

Before she became Queen, Marie Antoinette had often expressed the wish for a country house of her very own, in which to enjoy life quietly amid woods and birds.

The King knew of this wish, and said to her not long after his accession :—

"Now I am able to satisfy your longing, and beg you to accept Trianon for your private use. It has always been the residence of the King's favourites, therefore it ought to be yours."

Marie Antoinette was delighted, and answered jokingly :—

"I accept it on the condition that you will never come without an invitation."

Little Trianon is a two-storied building. In former times there were eight small thatched cottages round about for poor families, each with a little garden. Then close by were a windmill and a schoolhouse.

Etiquette was dispensed with in this retired country life. The Queen left Versailles on foot in the morning to hasten to her pretty châlet, where she ran about in the gardens and gathered handfuls of flowers.

She superintended the workmen, crocheted or sewed under the trees she had had planted, churned butter, and preserved fruit. She had her favourite cows, which she occasionally milked; her doves and hens, which she fed; and her flowers, which she tended.

It was country life in all its comfort and liberty, such as was led under Maria Theresa in the old patriarchal home of the Habsburgs.

The evenings were spent in the drawing-room, with windows and doors opened on to the garden, and, when she had visitors,

the Queen herself handed them tea. They went and came, sat down, walked about, or chatted; in fact, they did exactly as they pleased.

The piano stood open; first one then another sat down to it, or the Comtesse de Polignac played the harp, to which Marie Antoinette sang little ditties of her own composing, one of which I copy:—

"Sylvandre est ton vainqueur;
Elle a pris d'autres chaînes
Elle fait ma douleur.
Elle rit de mes peines.
Hélas! mon faible cœur
Regrettant l'infidèle
Trouve encore son bonheur
Á soupirer pour elle."

The verses had no beauty, and the Queen's voice was very poor; but her French listeners were not so honest as Gustavus III. of Sweden, who said to her, "For a queen you do not sing so badly."

On Sundays she allowed all well-dressed people to come to Trianon, and to dance on the lawns or under a tent; she even danced with them in order to add to their enthusiasm. Ill-natured people called her country retreat "the Queen's little Vienna," an expression which annoyed her as much as her own nickname of "the Austrian," and she always refused permission to those who asked to see her "little Vienna."

The King went unattended to Trianon, and the Princess Elizabeth was frequently there; but the Comtesse de Polignac and her circle were among the most regular guests. They came in morning dress even for dinner, and walked, played, or lay on the grass. Ladies remained sitting if the Queen went up to them, and the gentlemen never thought of interrupting a game of billiards on her approach.

They played at blindman's-buff and other games in the garden, and jumped over flower-beds and low hedges; or they rushed through rooms, shaking the furniture, and overturning statues and porcelain vases that were thus broken to atoms. Once, when the Princesse de Lamballe was complaining that she had

not been invited to Trianon the previous evening, the Queen replied:—

"You lost nothing by your absence; not a thing was broken."

Malicious tongues—which never ceased to pursue Marie Antoinette as long as she lived, and attacked her every word and action—especially singled out Trianon with which to reproach her.

When she was on her trial the judges brought against her the sums she had squandered there, and maintained that she had wasted millions on this favourite retreat.

When the Revolution was near at hand, and the National Assembly was about to meet, people came from all parts of France strongly prejudiced against her on account of her extravagance and reputed immoral life.

Everybody wished to see Trianon; but the magnificence they expected to find was not there, though they would not believe in its apparent plainness. Members of the National Assembly had heard of rooms studded with diamonds, and when they could not find them they maintained they had been denied entrance to the most splendid apartments.

The buildings were far from being as magnificent or the expenses as enormous as the enemies of the Royal Family made both themselves and others believe, though the park and pleasure grounds were certainly very beautiful and expensive to keep up.

There are proofs that the Queen's improvements, with all expenditure for maintaining the house and garden in order, did not exceed two million francs, spread over twelve years. This was, no doubt, a large sum when we think of the prevailing distress, but little in proportion to the other expenses of the court, and the incredible sums that were lavished on other estates.

But if malice has magnified the Trianon expenses, life there was not without its dangers. Sceptre and shepherd's crook do not go well together, and it is unwise, even for a brief period, to exchange a golden crown for a wreath of field flowers.

Goncourt remarks, "Private life and its amenities are forbidden to royal personages. Their pleasures must be regal, and their friendships without partiality, their smile the portion of

all. Not even their heart can be called their own, and they may not indulge their feelings. If a queen yields to her own tastes—though they may be in accordance with her sex and age, the purity of her soul, and the inclination of her heart—she can claim neither the indulgence of courtiers, the silence of malicious tongues, nor the mercy of the historian."

And this was the long and painful experience of Marie Antoinette.

Little Trianon, where life seemed to be so peaceful and innocent, was, on closer inspection, only a centre of intrigue where she was besieged for favours, and where it was more difficult to resist the importunities of her friends than amid the ceremonies of Versailles.

Charming women and unscrupulous men dared to remove their masks, expose their ambition, and urge their claims.

One of the gentlemen, who played duets with the Queen, aimed at becoming a minister; another, who amused her with his witticisms, wished to be made ambassador; while a third used every persuasion to gain some other lucrative post at court.

Fortune and appointments were looked for from this intercourse with the Queen; in short, it was hoped that the narrow staircase of private life would lead up to posts of honour in the Royal Castle.

The Comtesse de Polignac was looked upon as an especially useful tool in the hands of these people, who led her on to interfere with both the court appointments of the Queen and the politics of the King. She even tried to bring about changes in the Ministry.

Her sister-in-law, Diana, lived so completely with her friends that she forgot that she was in the service of the Princess Elizabeth. The King's young sister was nearly always about alone, and even ran away one day to a convent, from which Louis XVI. himself fetched her home again.

However free from reproach the intercourse between the Queen and the Comtesse de Polignac may have been, it is certain that very few believed it; while first one and then another of the gentlemen at court was said to be in especial favour with the Queen.

Marie Antoinette was continually exposed to malicious slander, but it cannot be denied that the reports that were circulated were not always without some foundation.

Her imprudence was simply incredible. After she had caught the measles from Madame de Polignac she had the singular fancy to choose four gentlemen to be with her in Trianon, where she was keeping her bed. Among them was Count Valentine Esterhazy, whom mischievous tongues pronounced to be her lover.

The King, who generally acceded to the caprices of his wife, allowed these gentlemen to retire with her to Trianon, while he remained in Versailles, as he was afraid of infection!

The four nurses laughed at the King's fears, and declared themselves ready to remain both night and day with the Queen. Her old friend, Count Mercy, had to use all his persuasion to induce them to leave her at eleven o'clock at night, and not to return till the next day.

Both the court and the city were far from indulgent in their remarks about these nurses, and amused themselves by naming four ladies who could attend upon the King if *he* should take to his bed.

One evening she had been dancing with Count Dillon, "handsome Dillon," as he was called, when she suddenly stood still in the middle of the ball-room and said to him:—

"Feel how my heart is beating."

Her partner wished for nothing better than to prove the fact, and put his hand upon her heart.

"Only listen," the King called out to him, "you must be content to take Her Majesty's word on trust."

When guests of distinction arrived at the court of Louis XVI., an excursion to Trianon was always included in the programme for their entertainment.

The most frequent royal visitor was Gustavus III., King of Sweden, who some years later espoused the cause of his hosts with so much chivalrous zeal. He often stayed in Paris for some time under the name of "Le Comte de Haga." Louis always welcomed him with cordiality, and Gustavus was accustomed to drive out to Versailles without notice, which sometimes rather upset the day's routine at court.

One day when he suddenly appeared the King was out hunting. He was sent for immediately, but as his valets knew nothing about his return there was nobody in his room to assist him to change his clothes; so he managed by himself as well as he could and put on all his orders, but the wrong side out. He changed his hunting boots for court shoes, but as he could not find a pair he put on his right foot one with a silver bow and red heel, and on the left one with a gold bow and black heel. The Queen was much displeased when she saw her husband, and asked him angrily if he were dressed for a masquerade, or if he had only the intention of giving the King of Sweden an idea of the good taste of the French.

On another occasion Gustavus arrived unexpectedly at Trianon and invited himself to dine with the Queen, who sent into the kitchen to enquire if there was anything suitable to offer to a royal guest.

"Do not be disturbed," exclaimed Gustavus laughing. "Where there is enough for two people there is always sufficient for three."

Marie Antoinette was not attracted by his blunt manner, and Gustavus does not seem to have been especially taken with the Queen. He frankly criticised her playing and singing, and let it be understood that her performances wearied him. One evening, when the Queen had refused to dance, alleging that she was too old, he asked her jokingly if she had been fond of dancing in her youth, a question which at that time was not acceptable to Her Majesty, who was barely twenty-eight.

CHAPTER XII.

The Queen's Extravagance—Gambling Scandals at Court—Marie Antoinette's Connection with Art and Literature—Royal Actors at Trianon.

If the manners in France had been the same as those to which Marie Antoinette had been accustomed at home, she would have shone in her new surroundings. Her taste was decidedly for family life, and she would certainly have sought for happiness in the domestic circle.

In the position she was called upon to fill, as the centre of a corrupt court, neglected, and a stranger to her husband, without serious interests, but with an intense craving for affection, she had been compelled to seek for happiness outside herself.

As Dauphiness she had not shown the smallest inclination to be extravagant; on the contrary, she had been particularly economical, and when she became Queen she could boast of being without a single debt.

Also, in the early days of her reign, she does not seem to have had any intention of incurring unnecessary expenses.

But she was dazzled by her elevated position, and, incited by her friends, soon rushed into a perfect vortex of pleasures, which, as we have seen, cost enormous sums. Then, in addition to this, she developed a passion for the possession of ornaments, especially diamonds.

For instance, in January, 1776, she bought a pair of diamond ear-rings which cost 40,000 francs. Hardly six months later a bracelet, valued at 250,000 francs, besides innumerable other jewels, and this at a time when thousands of her subjects were crying out for bread and a roof to shelter them.

The charges brought against Marie Antoinette are exaggerated in more than one respect; her dignity under suffering deserves

sympathy, but her extravagance with famine in the land is a stain on her memory which can never be obliterated.

"The stories I hear about you cut me to the heart," wrote Maria Theresa; "the accounts of your diamonds have humiliated me. My dear, my dear daughter, my first queen, what will this lead to? The thought of it is unbearable."

The Queen was persuaded to join in gambling, which was prevalent at court, and lost enormous sums.

At first she played privately with her friends, but one day at Fontainebleau she obtained permission from the King to send a messenger to Paris for a banker to advance money for herself and the company while they played.

Louis objected at first, but, with his usual weakness, yielded "for this once."

They took him at his word and did not leave the card-table for a day and a half. A night, a day, and the following night the Queen played uninterruptedly.

From this time it was an established custom at court, and Marie Antoinette became an ardent gambler. On the first of each month she received 500 gold pieces—her pocket money, as she called them—and these were often lost at cards in the course of the same evening.

Once in Marly she lost 7000 gold pieces (140,000 francs) at one swoop. When she and her ladies returned from these parties, the front breadths of their gowns were often so black with the piles of money they had had in their laps that they were obliged to change before they could be seen.

The meetings generally terminated with noise and confusion. The Comte d'Artois screamed with joy when he won, with rage when he lost, and several of the courtiers were such heavy losers that they had to relinquish their posts.

It was discovered one day that the dice were marked, a sure proof that somebody was cheating. On another occasion a bag of money disappeared, and it was proposed to search the pockets of the high-born ladies and gentlemen present.

More than one adventurer, more than one spendthrift, reaped a rich harvest from the royal gambling tables.

An Englishman of doubtful reputation, who had returned from

India in the possession of a large fortune, received an intimation that he must stake 200,000 gold pieces at cards.

He was introduced to the Queen and played with her, the royal princes and princesses, and gentlemen at court. In a short time he had won from them 1,500,000 gold pieces, or 30,000,000 francs.

This extravagant play brought discredit on the crown itself, and Count Mercy seriously blames the Queen in his letters, though he is not less severe in his censure of the King, who allowed her and his court to indulge in amusement so opposed to royal dignity.

Games of hazard were forbidden by the police regulations in France, and yet they were countenanced to such an unlimited extent in the King's house.

It is easy to foresee that serious consequences had to follow: the whole world was scandalized, loud murmurs of displeasure were heard in Paris, and the peace of innumerable families was destroyed.

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We have gathered from all this that Marie Antoinette avoided the society of steady women of experience and preferred the flattery and admiration of men, especially if her own sex addressed her with words of warning or counsel. She was far from clever, and we know that her education had been painfully deficient; but still she tried to appear intellectual.

It is an historical fact that her library, both in Versailles and Trianon, consisted almost entirely of immoral books, which had been selected and read by her court; and, with the exception of these indecent novels, or plays in which she wished to act, Marie Antoinette, as Queen, hardly opened a single book.

She did not even seek the information society can give. If a serious topic was introduced, weariness was expressed in every feature. Her conversation was always abrupt and superficial; she darted from one subject to another, and took pleasure only in the trifles of the day. Her great delight was to hear the current gossip and scandal, of which there was always plenty.

She encouraged literature merely to keep up appearances as Queen of a large kingdom, and had no understanding for the

treasures of philosophy and poetry in her land, no ear for the voices of the times.

Voltaire's visit to Paris was an event in her husband's reign which attracted universal attention, and this king of genius, who died, stifled as it were by laurel wreaths and popular favour, had hardly arrived before he expressed the wish to be received by Louis and Marie Antoinette. This great scoffer, whose vanity is almost as renowned as his name, longed, even at the age of eighty, for the adulation of courtiers and the favour of kings. He had called the young Queen of France "the divine Antoinette," and said that "he felt the most intense admiration for her."

But Louis only saw in him the enemy of Christianity, and especially of Roman Catholicism, while Marie Antoinette felt but little interest in him as an author, and did not fear his baneful influence as an atheist. She was besieged with petitions to receive him at Versailles, but on this one occasion she refused to yield to the importunities of her friends. She declared she did not wish to see him, and the doors of the Castle were closed to the great man.

Voltaire was disappointed. One of his friends comforted him with these words:—

"Let me tell you what you would have experienced at Versailles. The King, with his usual tact, would most likely have laughed in your face. The Queen would have talked about the theatre. The Comte de Provence would have questioned you about your income. His wife would have quoted some of your verses. The Comtesse d'Artois would have said nothing. Her husband would have discoursed to you about "La Pucelle."*

But the enthusiasm of the Parisians made him forget the neglect of the royal couple. "For the last few weeks," says the Count de Ségur, "there have been two courts in France: that of good King Louis, in Versailles, which is very dull, and that of Voltaire, in Paris, where noisy homage is paid him day by day."

The philosopher from Ferney was received, not only with shouts of enthusiasm, but of devotion, the echo of which reached the ears of the Queen and aroused her curiosity; but she could not understand it. While laurel wreaths were being placed on

* A celebrated satirical poem of Voltaire's.

the head of the poet in the Théâtre Français, and he was weeping with emotion, as he murmured "You are stifling me with roses," Marie Antoinette was in the neighbouring opera house. She had not thought it worth while to go to the theatre that evening.

And Jean Jacques Rousseau was treated with the same indifference that she showed to Voltaire, the "prince of biting satire." Grimm relates how she one day visited the grounds of Eromvilles accompanied by her court. She stood for some time on the poplar island where Rousseau is buried, and it was hoped that thoughts of the deceased philosopher had induced her to make the pilgrimage. But no such honour was paid to his memory on this occasion.

The Queen looked at the tomb and found the architecture tasteful, the spot pleasant. Then she suddenly began to talk of something else, without a spark of interest in the man to whom the monument was erected.

Music was the only talent that Marie Antoinette can even be said to have possessed, and almost her sole interest at this time, the one art that she encouraged.

In the midst of her wild pursuit of pleasure and general instability it was always dear to her, and even after she became Queen she continued to take lessons both in music and singing. She learnt to play the harp, though never very well—still, she read at sight with facility, and very frequently gave concerts in her own apartments.

She liked to talk as a connoisseur of music, although she understood far less about it than she thought she did.

"I do not like French music," she remarked one day as Dauphiness, "there is something empty about it which surprises me."

The director of the opera, who wished to please her, sent for Gluck from Vienna to conduct some performance in Paris.

For Marie Antoinette Gluck was not only the great composer, but a memory of her native land and her childhood.

His *Iphigenia in Aulis* was given, and the Dauphiness, who sat in the royal box, applauded and clapped her hands in honour of her former teacher.

But the French audience did not share her enthusiasm, and Gluck's *chef d'œuvre* was but coldly received.

This performance took place early in 1774, when Madame du Barry was in full power, patronizing the Italian composer Piccini.

It soon came to open warfare between the adherents of the German and Italian schools, resulting in family disunion and the separation of friends. The opponents of Madame du Barry cried: "Long live Gluck! Long live the Dauphiness! Down with the Countess! Down with Piccini!"

Things went so far that even in the theatre people of opposite views tore each other's hair, and Madame Oberkirch tells us in her *Mémoires* that the frenzy and shrieking were so tremendous "that it was sometimes necessary to separate the disputants by force."

Piccini's admirers thought it good taste to stop their ears at the sound of Gluck's music, while the latter's friends considered it their duty to weep with emotion when they heard their master's melodies.

The battle between these musical adherents continued during the early years of the reign of Louis XVI., and when Marie Antoinette became Queen she gave Gluck a yearly pension of 6000 francs, with the *entrée* to her morning receptions. When his next opera, *Alceste*, was performed, and the audience was again unappreciative, she was present, and applauded in striking contrast to their indifference.

Disappointed and embittered the master left Trianon, after a residence of five years. But he had to promise his royal pupil to return, and later on she bestowed on him the title of music-teacher to the King's children.

Madame Saint-Huberti was the *prima donna* who undertook the chief character in Gluck's *Armida*. She was German by birth, but was looked upon as the most brilliant artiste in the French opera.

Gluck himself taught her the *rôle* of *Armida*, and Marie Antoinette greatly admired her talent. She was more generous to her than to many others of her class, and ordered Mademoiselle Bertin to provide her with dresses. In addition to this she repeatedly paid her heavy debts.

August Vestris, the ballet-dancer of European renown, was also at this time high in the Queen's favour.

"This god of the dance," as he was called, was most cavalier in his treatment of the public, and sometimes capriciously refused to appear.

One evening it happened that the Queen was in the theatre, when the young man declared that he did not mean to dance, and he was immediately arrested.

Alarmed at the possible consequences of his son's indiscretion, his father—in his time also a famous dancer—implored the Queen to forgive him.

"My son did not know," he said, "that Your Majesty was honouring his performance with your presence. If he had known it, how could he have refused to dance before his royal patroness? I am in despair at this misunderstanding between the houses of Vestris and Bourbon, that have hitherto lived on such a good footing."

Marie Antoinette was greatly amused at the pride of the old dancer, and sent one of her pages with the message that his son was to be released.

August Vestris reappeared and exerted himself to the utmost, gaining warm applause from the Queen.

As she was leaving her box both the old man and his son came forward to thank her.

"Monsieur Vestris," said Marie Antoinette to the father, "*you* never danced so well as your son did this evening."

"That is easily explained, Your Majesty," was the rejoinder, "*I* never had a Vestris for my master."

Marie Antoinette had been fond of the theatre from her earliest youth, and we saw in a previous chapter how she delighted to act in secret with her brothers-in-law and their wives. There was a small stage in most of the French castles at this period, and during the twenty years of the reign of Louis XVI. private theatricals were the fashion.

The Queen, who was always seeking for some fresh amusement, thought she would like to have a theatre with actors of her own, and ordered a pretty room in Trianon to be arranged for the purpose.

This little theatre, where actors from Paris appeared on the opening night, soon tempted the Queen to become a performer herself.

It was arranged at first that the company was to consist exclusively of ladies and the Comte d'Artois, who expected to share in everything that could be called pleasure. The only spectators to be admitted were the King, the Comte de Provence, and the royal princesses who were not acting.

But these arrangements were soon altered. The Comtesse de Provence, prompted by her husband, refused to act, and showed without disguise that she considered it beneath her dignity to tread the boards.

Then, on the other hand, at the very first appearance several gentlemen took part, and the Queen's ladies, their sisters and daughters, were allowed to be present, so that there were certainly not fewer than forty spectators.

Later on permission was granted, not only to these ladies, but also to officers of the guard and others, so that the number of spectators was increased to at least three hundred each evening.

Minor pieces were at first chosen, to be quickly followed by more ambitious plays, for which instruction was given by actors from Paris.

It was Marie Antoinette's freshness and youth that gave the charm to these evenings, and in spite of her great dislike to reading, she always learnt her part most accurately.

She acted all sorts of characters—a farmer's wife, a mistress, a housemaid, only never a queen.

Her ordinary, rich, full-toned voice was naturally so melodious that she needed but little expression to satisfy her hearers.

Considering the actors were but amateurs they seem to have played well on the whole, though the Prince de Ligne certainly says that Marie Antoinette played "royally badly." Grimm, on the other hand, says "that she played with that bewitching charm which she knew how to cast over everything she undertook." He adds that "the acting in Trianon was better than that of dilettanti generally."

In a more serious period of her life Marie Antoinette lamented that her love of theatricals had enticed her to frequent the

company of actors, to listen to their counsels, and to play their parts.

It was irreconcilable with the dignity of the crown that the Queen of the land should act the part of a soubrette on the stage, and these performances were doubly hated by the populace, who could not witness them.

People can forgive extravagant expenditure if they derive some benefit from it, but if they are excluded from all participation in the pleasure, the temptation to blame and exaggerate is but the stronger.

Those who had no admittance to the Queen's plays looked upon the performances in Trianon as ruinous waste and an insult, in face of the scarcity in the country.

Innumerable stories were circulated about these plays, and were universally believed. It was said that the Queen acted so badly that the King hissed his royal consort, who screamed to him from the stage, "Hold your tongue, barbarian!"

Some maintained that the King generally slept during the performance. Others assert that the Queen ordered a detachment of soldiers to be admitted to the theatre, as she did not consider there were sufficient spectators to admire her acting and herself.

It is also said that she so far forgot her dignity that she stepped before the footlights immediately the piece was over and shouted to the soldiers, "I have done my best to amuse you. I wish I could have played better, that your pleasure might have been greater."

This last story is unhappily true.

CHAPTER XIII.

Marie Antoinette's Secret Troubles—Visit of her Brother Joseph—The Queen becomes a Mother for the First Time—Death of Maria Theresa—Birth of the Dauphin.

We dare not judge the Queen too harshly for yielding to this mania for amusement which absorbed her, nor implicitly believe every report against her. It is easy to see her faults, but we have no right to overlook the grievous mistakes in her husband's conduct towards her.

Louis' coldness had been a disappointment to the Dauphiness, and his separate life a trouble to her.

A childless wife always lacks something, and for a Queen the void is even greater. Adherents to the dynasty consider themselves aggrieved, and even if they do not express their thoughts, they generally think that such a royal wife is not fulfilling the end for which she herself was brought into the world.

Marie Antoinette, who was more devoted to children than many women, saw herself, year after year, in a humiliating position. It was her greatest sorrow to be childless, to feel a painful void in her apparently brilliant life; besides, it was the greatest reproach against her at this time.

The Comtesse d'Artois, who had married the year after her, had long since been a mother, and when Marie Antoinette saw her sister-in-law surrounded by her children, it was hard for her to restrain her tears.

"Give heirs to the throne," shouted the old fishwives after her in the street.

She was afraid things would never be otherwise, and so rushed into society and pleasure in order to forget her secret sorrow. She sought for amusement in the absence of happiness.

Such a life was not calculated to strengthen a woman who had not a single bracing task to fulfil. And while she was striving with unhealthy zeal to be a Queen of society, there was pallor beneath her rouge, and discontent hidden by her exuberant mirth.

The eagerness with which she courted pleasure sprang in a great measure from her longing to forget; it was the veil she cast over her disappointment. She felt that she was looked upon as a stranger in France as long as she had no children.

Wounded to the quick by the King's indifference she lost patience, and many a bitter word escaped her. One day, when a lady begged her not to ride, she exclaimed passionately:—

"Let me be, and know that I am running no risk with a future heir to the throne."

She was angry with her husband, whose apathy and coldness continually disappointed her hopes. She began to look upon him as a being without energy or character, a being who could claim no consideration, but whom she imagined she could rule by fear.

This was a mistake on her part, to be attributed far more to her overstrained nerves than to her heart.

Finding no response to her warm feelings in her husband she sought it among her friends, whom she chose without discrimination; and we have seen that it was they who led her into those mistakes and indiscretions of which she has been accused.

But young, alone in a strange land, it is not to be wondered at that she clung to attachment wherever she believed she had found it, and that she was so often mistaken in her longing for affection.

Maria Theresa was distressed that her daughter had no children. A mother's pride was united to the interests of a ruler, and she felt that it was difficult for Marie Antoinette to have much power as long as she was childless; besides, Austrian policy demanded that she should strengthen her influence in France.

Far from comforting her daughter in her trouble, the Empress irritated her continually by telling her of the births in the families of her other daughters and daughters-in-law. She returned to the subject again and again with especial persistency, using it as a spur, which hurt the poor Queen to the quick.

The private correspondence of Maria Theresa and Count Mercy teems with allusions to the Queen's situation, which lack refinement and are quite unfit for publication. And yet one can easily sympathize with this aged mother, if one reflects how essential it was that the Queen of France should have children.

The daughter submitted to her mother's reproaches in all humility, unjust as they were, and only once let a word escape her which showed the depth of her longing.

The Duchesse de Chartres was confined of a still-born child, and the Queen envied her, exclaiming, as she burst into tears, "Sad as it must be, I only wish I were in her place."

In spite of his indifference to the Austrian Archduchess, Louis felt himself attracted more and more towards her as years rolled on.

The first sign he gave of his warmer feelings was a hearty shake of the hand every night when he retired, so hearty indeed that the Queen sometimes felt tempted to scream with pain. Then, to her surprise, he began to kiss her on the forehead before he went to bed. Years afterwards the Queen reproached herself that she had never had the courage to complain to him about her desolate condition.

By so doing she would probably have spared herself sorrow with reference to his apparent coldness, and would have been able to silence the scandalous reports which were gradually destroying her reputation.

In spite of the King's reserve he was by no means unfriendly towards her. Whether he believed in the superiority of her mind, or feared her impetuosity, or had already been long in love with her, as many believed, it is certain that he liked to please her.

Whenever she turned to him it was easy to see by his countenance and manner how eagerly he wished to fulfil her wishes. In many respects she acquired such strong influence over him that he was like her slave, but for all that her burning thirst for happiness could not be satisfied with Louis' cold, timid, embarrassed affection.

It is not improbable that they would have continued this

estranged life together if Marie Antoinette's eldest brother had not visited his sister and brother-in-law at Versailles.

It was he who at length broke the ice, and induced the King by his arguments to live on conjugal terms with his wife.

Joseph came to France in 1777 under the incognito of Count Falkenstein, and this was almost the first visit that Marie Antoinette had received from her relations.

Her youngest brother, the weak-minded Maximilian, had been a few years previously, and had irritated the court, excited the contempt of the people, and driven his sister to despair with his stupidity and want of tact.

Joseph, on the contrary, was the very man to gain favour in France, and to charm society with the originality of his wit. Art, science, philosophy, and literature all united to greet the young Queen's brother.

The Princess Adelaide, who, as we know, was filled with bitterness against the house of Habsburg, became warmly attached to him, and one day, when the two were alone together, she put her arms round his neck and kissed him.

Even the "dames de la halle" paid him flattering compliments.

"The King, the Queen, and we," they shouted after him in the streets, "are all delighted to see you. Your sister is our mother, therefore you are our uncle."

Marie Antoinette's joy was intense at seeing her favourite brother again.

Seven years had passed since she left home, and the innocent child from Burg and Schönbrunn had become the brilliant Queen of France.

Joseph was charmed with her appearance, though by no means blind to her faults. He became her counsellor and friend, but his criticism was somewhat too public. Instead of whispering his remonstrances in her ear, he shouted them so loud that the whole of France heard them.

One morning, when he came into his sister's room, he saw a wonderful tower of flowers and feathers on her head, a work of art, just completed by Léonard.

Marie Antoinette asked him if he did not think her hair was nicely dressed.

"Yes," he answered drily.

"Do you not think the style suits me?" she asked further.

"To say the truth," replied her brother, "I think your head-dress is too fragile to bear a crown."

He wished to see more taste for reading and less frivolity in his sister's life, but above all, a deeper realization of her royal dignity.

He reproached her again and again for her imprudence, and Maria Theresa was told by him, as well as by her ambassador, how addicted her youngest daughter was to pleasure, luxury, and gambling.

"It is quite certain," said her brother, "that if this continues the court of France will sink down into a mere gambling house."

In spite of their disagreement the brother and sister were mutually distressed when the time came for them to separate.

"I left Versailles with regret, and feeling devoted to my sister," wrote Joseph to Maria Theresa; "she is amiable and charming, and I spent hour after hour with her without noticing the flight of time. She was much distressed when I left, though she maintained her composure, and I had to summon up all my courage to take my leave of her. . . ."

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On August 5th, 1778, the court was informed that the Queen was likely to become a mother, and the whole country went mad with joy.

Marie Antoinette was delighted, and exclaimed again and again, "I am going to have a child."

She had the news spread abroad among the people, and sent letters to announce it to her relations, while she constantly spoke of the care and tenderness with which she would surround her little one.

From the apathetic husband of former days Louis was now transformed into the passionate admirer of Marie Antoinette, and his honeymoon was beginning, after all these years of marriage. The expected event led him to display magnificent hospitality, and luxurious entertainments were provided for all connected with the court.

The enthusiasm created by the news made the Queen forget the reproaches with which she had been overwhelmed, and it seemed as though the slanderous reports of the lower classes would be silenced altogether. They were, at any rate, for a time.

The press, literature, poetry, and art did honour beforehand to the long-expected child, and all the cloisters, universities, noble, ecclesiastical, and military associations ordered solemn masses to be said, while prayers for the Queen were offered up in all the churches of France during many hours each day. People rushed to the Castle, deputations brought good wishes, and magnificent festivities were indulged in all over the land.

So great was the enthusiasm that the fathers and mothers of families, who could do nothing else, never enjoyed their wine without emptying the first glass to the health of their Queen.

And yet there were a few who did not share either the joy of the people or that of the royal pair.

After such a long, hopeless waiting, and the insults to which her neglected position had exposed her, the Queen was fully justified in her happiness, but the King's aunts found it scandalous.

When she spoke to them of her hopes the Princess Adelaide replied sharply, "I shall restrict myself to the repetition of a saying of my father's, 'A wise queen need never want for heirs.'"

The King's brothers and sisters-in-law behaved with apparent cordiality, but among their intimate friends they let fall expressions which showed how far they were from sharing in the universal rejoicing.

The Minister, who had hitherto ruled the King, now began to fear the power of Marie Antoinette, and such of the courtiers who were not among the friends of Madame de Polignac were affronted at being kept in the background just now.

At the very moment when it seemed as though her position as Queen was becoming more secure, shameful verses were being distributed in Paris and Versailles, and a few days before her confinement a volume of libellous songs about herself and her friends was thrown into the Castle garden close by her door.

Innumerable intrigues were going on at court with reference to the royal child. More than a hundred people in high positions,

who usually lived in Paris, removed to Versailles, that they might the sooner learn whether it was a prince or a princess. The town was crowded; it was almost impossible to get lodgings, and provisions were thrice as dear as usual.

According to one of the many singular court traditions in France, the Queen's confinement had to take place in the presence of the people, who, on this occasion, completely abused this old custom.

The event, which had been anticipated with so much impatience, took place December 20th, 1778. From early morning crowds of curious people filled the gardens and galleries of the Castle, while the suite of the King and Queen stood packed together in the royal apartments. But in the decisive, critical moment the crowd rushed through these, in terrible uproar, on into the Queen's bedchamber, behaving as if on a public square on a market day. The room was so full there was no space left, and two men from Savoy even jumped on to a table that they might the better see the whole affair.

An embroidered screen stood before the Queen, and Louis had had the forethought to order it to be secured with a cord, without which precaution it would inevitably have been overturned on to the bed.

The child was born about noon and was a daughter, the future Duchesse d'Angoulême. She was carried into an adjoining room, when most of the crowd rushed after the nurse and baby.

The birth of the princess nearly cost the life of the Queen. The heat, the throng, and the noise, possibly some disappointment that the child was not a son, brought on a sudden fainting fit.

"Air! warm water!" exclaimed the midwife; "the Queen must be bled."

The Princess Lamballe, who had returned for the event, fell down in a swoon, and had to be carried out.

The window could not be opened, and there was no air till the King rushed forward and broke a pane. The crowd, who had forced their way in, were ejected by the soldiers and servants, while the most agonizing fright and confusion reigned in the room. The Queen did not open her eyes for nearly an hour, but her life was saved.

She had hoped for a dauphin and was disappointed, but she was the mother of a lovely, healthy baby.

"Poor little one," she said, as she pressed her firstborn to her heart; "you are not the long-wished-for child, but you shall not be the less dear to me. A son would have belonged to the State, but you will share my joys and lessen my sorrows."

The King had but the one thought of happiness in his child and pride in his new dignity. Then all at once he seemed troubled as to how he could show his love. He ran from his wife to his daughter's cradle, took the little thing in his arms, put her down again, then finally carried her to her mother, and thus quite banished the disappointment of the Queen by his tenderness.

In order not to leave her he even gave up hunting, one of the few amusements that he had cared for. He was the first by her bedside in the morning, and spent both the afternoon and evening with her. Every minute he went to look at his daughter, and never seemed to tire of contemplating and caressing her.

The princess was baptized Marie Thérèse Charlotte with great ceremony in Paris. The capital was illuminated; bread, wine, and sausages were distributed among the poor, and free admission provided at the theatres.

But the joy of the people was less than had been expected. There was scarcity in the land and the taxes were oppressive; besides, they were not pleased that the child was a girl.

The day after her birth one of the ladies at court wrote: "We hope that the Queen will behave better next time."

And the Empress of Austria said in a private letter:—

"This little Marie Thérèse is superfluous." She was more impatient than ever for a grandson in France. As a politician she knew that it was essential for the strengthening of her daughter's position; and as a mother she wished it eagerly, because she hoped that the birth of a dauphin would crown the domestic happiness of her child. She continually reverted to this in her letters till it became a fixed idea, and she repeated incessantly: "We must absolutely have a dauphin."

"I am seized with impatience," she wrote to Marie Antoinette;

"my age will not let me wait. Hitherto I have been long-suffering, but now I am becoming importunate. It would be a great pity not to perpetuate such a race."

Tired of disappointment, she wrote a month later:—

"Still no prospects? I am in despair—we must have a dauphin—we *must* have one."

The wish was to be fulfilled, but not in the lifetime of Maria Theresa.

Her health declined rapidly under the strain of sorrow and State cares.

November 24th, 1780, she became seriously ill, the doctors gave no hope of recovery, and she received the last sacraments.

The mentally strong woman would not take to bed, even on the approach of death, but remained up to the very last.

"I have always wished to die thus," she said, "but I feared that it would not be granted to me. I see now that by the grace of God one can do anything."

She discussed several political points with her son Joseph, gave directions for her burial, and thought of her children, both absent and present, as well as of her subjects. She settled some details relating to disturbances in her dominions, thus preserving her clear judgment and strength of character till the hour of her death, immediately before which she pronounced a final blessing over her children.

Her voice quivered and her eyes filled with tears when she came to the name of Marie Antoinette, for she must have felt convinced in this farewell thought that sorrows and dangers were awaiting her favourite child.

The news of her death reached Versailles the sixth of December, and the daughter's grief was indescribable. She remained in her room for twelve days and spoke of nothing but her mother, her virtues, her counsel, and her example.

This time she was not alone in her sorrow. In spite of prejudice against the Austrian imperial house, expressions of respect and condolence were heard all over France. In Germany they were almost immoderate. Even Frederick the Great, her obstinate opponent, was loud in his grief.

"I have shed genuine tears at her death," he wrote to a

confidant. "She was an honour to her sex and the throne. I have made war against her, but she was never my enemy."

* * * * * *

A year after the death of the Empress a dauphin was born in France. In order to avoid a repetition of the disturbances at the birth of her first child, it was decided that only the nearest relations should have access to her room, and that the Queen should not be told whether the baby was a son or a daughter before all danger was over.

Early in the morning of October 22nd, 1781, the Royal Family and the Comtesse de Polignac received a message that the Queen felt unwell.

The ladies and gentlemen of the court ran from their rooms in the greatest haste, but had to remain outside. Full of eagerness and impatience they formed into groups, but they had only the comfort and amusement of laughing over each other's incongruous appearance, for in their haste not one of them had taken time to dress.

In the meantime Marie Antoinette was delivered of a son in the adjoining room, but the assistants looked so serious that the poor Queen thought that it was again a girl.

"You see how reasonable I am," she said; "I ask no questions."

The King could not restrain his joy, and said to her with tears in his eyes:—

"The Dauphin begs for permission to greet his mother."

A perfect burst of joy spread over the whole land; there was laughing and weeping side by side. Strangers who had never met fell on each other's necks, and even those who were hostile to the Queen got carried away in the universal enthusiasm.

For a whole month congratulations came pouring in, and fêtes were daily held in honour of the baby.

One speech ran thus:—

"Your birth is our joy. We set our hopes on your education. Your virtues will be our safety."

If any human being can be described as happy in this world it was the Queen of France at this time. She seemed to possess everything that she could desire.

She suddenly found herself surrounded by the crowd of admirers and friends that always accompany the fortunate. High and low rushed to the foot of her throne with offerings and congratulations. Both strangers and acquaintances pressed round her to see her smile, or feel the pressure of her hand, while apparently kindly looks followed her every step. Marie Antoinette's dream was fulfilled: she was the mother of a dauphin. She was nearer to her husband, and she believed she was in closer relationship with her own people.

She seemed to be loved by all; she was the first in the first country of Europe.

If the future were known to us, who could pride himself on happiness? Power, riches, and honour, everything that our heart holds dear, is but a toy with which a capricious fate amuses itself for a moment, and then, often without warning, dashes it to atoms.

CHAPTER XIV.

Baptism of the Dauphin—Marie Antoinette's Reputed Lovers—The Comte d'Artois—Baron Besenval—Lauzun—Count Fersen—Castelnaux.

THE joy of the Queen at the birth of the Dauphin was too great to be of long duration, and the event which removed the brothers and sisters of the King from the throne roused in them bitter discontent, in the midst of almost universal rejoicing.

A contemporary relates of the Comtesse de Provence that her temper was unbearable.

When the Comte d'Artois took his eldest son to the Castle to see the Dauphin, the boy exclaimed, as he caught sight of the cradle, "How tiny my cousin is!"

"A day will come," answered his father bitterly, "when you will find that he is more than big enough."

The Dauphin was christened at the close of January, 1782.

The King was in a very bad temper that day, and yawned with *ennui* all through the evening entertainment. Then at dinner he had complained that the fish was badly cooked and that the meat was tough, while he crossly refused everything that his wife suggested.

The dukes and many distinguished men who were present also complained that the food was poor, and declared they had had nothing but radishes and butter set before them. Then the populace grumbled that money should be wasted on unnecessary illuminations in such a season of scarcity.

Worse than the King's bad temper, worse than these petty expressions of displeasure, was a horrible, libellous report full of disgusting stories about the Queen, which was found nailed on the church door the morning of the child's christening day.

In the early days of their marriage, when Louis had lived

apart from her, his wife had longed for him. She was undoubtedly kindly disposed towards him, though her feelings were not warm. But while the King was passing from the indifferent husband to the passionate lover other sentiments were taking root in the heart of Marie Antoinette, who had been left to herself while the gulf had been widening between them.

The natural consequence was that she became passionate, nervous, and discontented.

When they at last came together her heart was absorbed with affection for her female friends; or men, better looking and more attractive, had claimed her attention.

Clumsy Louis, who rolled about the drawing-rooms more like a blacksmith than a king, without speaking a word, had indeed received her hand, but not her heart.

It had been no easy thing for the Queen to turn away from the adulation that met her at every step. Her slightest word, her most casual look, every petty mark of attention, was construed into favour or attachment on her part. She was young and strikingly beautiful, with none but courtiers and flatterers around her, and it would have needed far more experience and wisdom than she possessed not to be dazzled by the homage paid her.

Whatever his age, his family ties, his difference in rank might be, no man could approach Marie Antoinette without slanderous tongues assailing her honour and pitying the King. When she stood at the bar of the National Assembly a list of twenty men was produced, of all ages and conditions, with whom she was alleged to have had illicit intercourse.

But it was her brother-in-law, the Comte d'Artois, who more than any other injured her reputation, and his licentious life was well known in every circle. No wonder, then, that the Queen's frequent companionship with him gave malicious tongues fruitful topics for slander.

The whole of France spoke of her intimacy with him, and maintained that Marie Antoinette lost no opportunity that could serve to alienate the Comte more and more from his good-natured, modest little wife.

Although the King did not attach much importance to the rumours about this intercourse, he could not refrain from remonstrating with his wife on the subject. But, accustomed as she was to rule her peace-loving husband, his warnings do not seem to have made the shadow of an impression on her, and she continued to play, dance, and flirt with her brother-in-law.

One night the Comte d'Artois and the Queen drove back very late to the Castle, and the sentinel at the gates declared that they could not come in.

"What do you mean?" cried the Prince. "Do you not know me?"

"I beg your pardon, Your Royal Highness, but my orders do not exclude you."

"Nor me?" said the Queen as she put her head out of the carriage window.

"Not even Your Majesty," answered the sentinel; "it grieves me that it is my duty to say so."

"Call the officer on duty!" said the Queen angrily.

"We are acting under orders," answered the officer as he bowed to the very ground.

"Send a messenger to the first in command!" said Marie Antoinette with increased anger.

The important man appeared, bowed, if possible, more humbly than his predecessor, and excused himself as well as he could; but he too had to obey orders which had been given by the King.

Neither the entreaties and threats of the Queen, nor the oaths and curses of her brother-in-law, could induce the officers to act against the King's express command.

Marie Antoinette and her companion were obliged to return to the Royal Theatre, whence they had come, and whence the Queen in gloom and darkness, with innumerable difficulties, did at length manage to reach her own apartments.

The next morning she sought the King.

"Is it possible that I am to be a prisoner in my own palace?" she asked, with the pride which formed the basis of her whole being.

"Is it your will that I should be subjected to the indignity of not being allowed to return home when I choose?"

"I am master in my own house," answered the King; "and I require that all the inmates shall be at home when I go to bed."

With these words he turned his back, and went away without giving her time to utter a word.

It is probable that he was more exasperated by Marie Antoinette's apparent flightiness than he allowed it to appear either to her or to his brother.

The Comte d'Artois was so steeped in pleasure, so full of youthful high spirits at this time, that he infected his sister-in-law with his irresistible liveliness. Though they were inseparable, and though a courtier has called the brother-in-law "an accurate thermometer for the Queen's favour," her heart and better feelings had no share in their intimacy.

But Marie Antoinette was mistaken if she thought that her perfect innocence was sufficient to prevent slander.

The Comte de Provence, the natural protector of the throne, hated his sister-in-law, especially after she had become a mother.

Even in the cathedral of Notre Dame, at the baptism of little Marie Thérèse, he slandered her in a most atrocious manner.

He was proxy for the absent godfather, the King of Spain, and the officiating Cardinal asked him what name was to be given to the child.

"That is not the first question," answered the royal Prince; "the first is to enquire who are the father and mother of the baby?"

The sneering tone with which he pronounced the words sufficiently indicated his meaning. They fell on fruitful soil, and it was believed at court that the Comte d'Artois was the father.

The report was current for a time before it reached beyond the highest circles. But as the hatred of the people increased against Marie Antoinette, public opinion accepted the insinuation which the Comte de Provence had expressed, and clung to it tenaciously.

Among the gentlemen whose company Marie Antoinette enjoyed Baron Besenval deserves to be mentioned, as he had decided influence over her will for many years.

He belonged to an old Swiss family, and, after having served

the King of France with honour in the Seven Years' War, had been made a field-marshal and commander of the Swiss Guards at Versailles.

Besenval was no longer young, in spite of a juvenile appearance. He had retained the frugal habits of the Swiss, and was apparently without ambition, though he liked to pose as a protector in order to show off his influence. He was courted for his liveliness, but dreaded on account of his biting sarcasm, as he allowed himself to express his opinion sharply to everybody and about everything.

His personal courage bordered on foolhardiness. In one of the battles in which he was engaged a retreat was ordered. He obeyed the command, but suddenly turned back to face the fire of the enemy again.

"What are you doing?" cried his comrades to him, "we have all left off fighting."

"This is like being at a ball," answered the baron excitedly from the midst of a shower of bullets. "One is tired, but cannot leave off as long as one hears the sound of the violins."

The Queen appreciated his superior intelligence, and listened to him the more eagerly as he openly declared himself an ally of the ex-Minister Choiseul, thus showing Swiss steadfastness of character by his adherence to a man in disgrace.

But still we must confess that his influence was unhealthy, and his malicious remarks continually excited the Queen's love of ridicule. Besides, she carried her intimacy with him so far as to reveal to him the secrets of her married life, and to join with him in making fun of her husband.

In the streets was heard:—

"La Reine dit imprudemment
À Besenval son confident:
'Mon mari est un pauvre sire.'
L'autre répond d'un ton léger:
'Chacun le pense sans le dire,
Vous le dites sans y penser.'"

Besenval's influence received a check one day when a bright smile and kind look from his royal mistress's beautiful eyes roused the feelings of the Swiss to fever heat. Forgetting his fifty years,

and especially that she was a queen, he threw himself at her feet and stammered forth the declaration of his love.

"Rise, Besenval," said Marie Antoinette, "the King must not hear of this imprudent act, which would lose you his favour for ever."

She felt herself affronted as a queen; but the woman in her saw no great insult in his words. Declarations of love are injuries which a woman in the depths of her heart can nearly always find it easy to forgive.

Marie Antoinette's confidence was shaken; but her resentment did not last long, and she remained on a friendly footing with Besenval even after that day.

He lived to see the French monarchy fall to pieces with regret, and defended it, sword in hand, till shortly before the crash, and died two years prior to the Queen.

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The Duc de Biron, known under the name of Lauzun, has left *Mémoires* which have injured the reputation of Marie Antoinette.

He had every advantage possible on his entrance into society, including an attractive appearance and a ready wit. He was nephew to the Duchesse de Choiseul, who was his mother's sister, and, when only nineteen, had married the beautiful Mademoiselle de Boufflers, granddaughter and heiress of the Maréchal de Luxemburg; but, although his wife was as amiable and clever as she was beautiful, he persistently neglected her.

The Queen first met him in the society of the Princesse de Guéménée, and received him with kindness as a relative of her old friend, the former Minister, Choiseul.

"I was her favourite for two months," wrote Lauzun.

He lived abroad for a time, but soon returned, and, according to his own account, rose higher still in the favour of the Queen.

Marie Antoinette is hardly free from blame in this intercourse, and though she may not have been in love with him, her preference for his society was far too apparent. Lauzun maintains that he never became her lover, simply because he himself did not wish it.

Whatever her feelings may have been they did not last long,

and her goodwill towards him soon cooled, though the handsome nobleman continued to express an insulting passion for her, and in order to attract her attention he adopted the livery of the royal servants.

He followed her like a shadow by day, and all through the night he sat like a watch-dog at the threshold of her room.

All his advances remained unnoticed, and yet he did not tire of his menial disguise.

One day when Marie Antoinette was about to enter her carriage he had the conceit to kneel and force her to use his person as a step. The Queen, who was short-sighted, looked at this supposed lacquey through her eye-glass with amazement; but, on recognizing him, she appeared not to know him, and called for one of her pages.

"See that this man is dismissed," she said; "he is a lout, and cannot even open a carriage door."

A few years before the Revolution broke out the old Duc de Biron died, and Lauzun, who was heir to his name and titles, should have been promoted to the post of commander-in-chief of the French Guard, but another was chosen in preference, according to the wishes of the Queen.

Lauzun afterwards joined the party of the Duc d'Orléans, and became one of Marie Antoinette's bitterest enemies.

In 1792 he was the darling of the democrats and a general in the Republican army; but three months after the execution of the Queen he too mounted the scaffold, and is said to have exclaimed in his last moments:—

"I have been faithless to my God, to my station in life, and to my King; I die full of faith and repentance."

He sullied the reputation of the Queen during his life, and has continued his persecution of her after his death, for *Les Mémoires de Lauzun*, which were published in 1818, are a shameful accusation of the woman whom he pretended to love so deeply.

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There are hours in our lives which are apparently without importance, but which, nevertheless, exercise an influence on our destiny.

It was the 10th of January, 1774, that the Swedish Ambassador, Count Creutz, introduced his young countryman, Johan Axel Fersen, to the Dauphiness, when neither of them could possibly realize that this was the first step towards a friendship which was to prove of such exciting import to them both.

Fersen was only nineteen on his arrival in France. The Dauphiness was the same age, so that they were almost children at the time of this first meeting.

Marie Antoinette was eager to please and welcome the Swedish Count, the bearer of a well-known old name, with cordiality. Fersen was already attractive with his manly carriage and his calm, beautiful, though somewhat cold features. The very first impression he made on the Dauphiness was, however, not a very deep one. A few days after the introduction chance procured them another meeting, this time at a masked ball.

We know that the *bals d'opéra* in Paris were the rendezvous, at this time, of all the leaders of society, and, as a stranger, Fersen was anxious to see everything that he could.

He was walking about, contemplating and admiring the scene, when a domino approached him and began to talk.

She was elegant and her voice was refined. He enjoyed the adventure, and the stranger remained talking to him for some time, while all around people were laying their heads together and whispering, "Who is this stranger?"

One can easily picture his surprise when the mask made itself known as the Dauphiness when she took leave of him.

Fersen remained some time in Paris, where he was welcomed in the highest circles. Before his return he was present at a court ball in Versailles, when he met the Dauphiness for the third time, though on this occasion she did not address him. He left France a few weeks after the death of Louis XV., and did not return for three years.

It is hardly likely that he flattered himself the Queen would recognize him; but, at any rate, he did not expect the reception he met with when he went to Versailles to be presented to the new sovereigns.

Just before the introduction, a voice, which had been fixed in his memory, exclaimed:—

"But that is an old acquaintance." Marie Antoinette had recognized him the very minute he had entered the room.

His joy at this mark of royal interest was heightened as he felt that it was not due to a caprice of the moment. The Queen took evident pleasure in showing him each day fresh marks of her favour.

The young Count wrote to his father:—

"The Queen, who is the most beautiful and the most amiable Princess I know, has had the kindness to ask after me several times. She recently enquired of Creutz why I did not attend her card parties on Sundays. When she heard that I had one day been present when there was no play going on, she almost apologized to me."

He constantly received invitations to Trianon, and was one of the most welcome guests. Balls, theatricals, and fêtes followed one after the other, and Fersen shared in them all. When he talked to ladies there was such grace in his movements, such gentleness in his voice, and such a mixture of devotion and respect in his manner, that he won all hearts.

He was called "Zephyr," or "beautiful Fersen," and all were unanimous that he was one of the most polished courtiers that they had seen for a long while.

There is no doubt that the Queen read his admiration of her in his looks, and the intimacy between them soon became apparent, while a thousand small signs showed that they were on the verge of a mutual attachment.

During one of the réunions in Trianon the Queen sat down to the piano and sang with evident emotion one of the pretty verses from the opera of *Dido*, beginning:—

"Ah! que je fus bien inspirée
Quand je vous reçus dans ma cour!"

As she sang she looked expressively at the bashful Fersen, who hardly dared to admit to himself that he had made so deep an impression. He had too much penetration not to perceive that Marie Antoinette's attention might become dangerous to them both in the face of the jealous watching and slanderous remarks to which they were exposed. In contrast to the French courtier,

who proudly boasted of the favour he conceived himself to possess, the chivalrous Fersen only thought of saving her reputation at the cost of any sacrifice to himself.

There was only one means of silencing malicious tongues; he must leave the Queen and the French court.

Circumstances concurred to further his plans. The War of Independence had broken out in America, and the cause of the rebellious colonists had aroused great sympathy in France, from whose harbours arms and military supplies were constantly being shipped. His wish to lessen the power of England induced Louis XVI. to side with those who were struggling for liberty against the mother country, and crowds of young Frenchmen were leaving for the war on the other side of the Atlantic.

Axel Fersen joined them, and asked for permission to enter one of the regiments being formed by Lafayette and Rochambau.

Marie Antoinette was as unable to disguise her sorrow at his departure as she had been to hide her affection for him, and she could not refrain her tears each time she looked at him before he left.

Her favourite did not relax in his respectful reserve. Referring to his journey, the wife of an envoy said to him:—

"How is this, Count, you are renouncing your conquest?"

"If I had made a conquest I would not renounce it," answered the cautious Fersen. "I am leaving France free from every tie, and unfortunately without a regret."

At the conclusion of the war he returned. The favour in which he again stood was calculated to awaken the surmises which his stay in America was to have dispelled. The Queen received him among her most intimate friends, and made him even still more her favourite.

If the Count had had a mistress he could have silenced the suspicions which tried to prove a tender relationship between Marie Antoinette and himself. But he had too much respect for his beloved to indulge in ordinary flirtations. His father, as well as the Swedish Ambassador, repeatedly tried to induce him to make a suitable marriage. At first the young man appeared willing to enter into their plans, but invariably withdrew from an alliance before the decisive moment.

He was reticent towards the woman he loved, and Marie Antoinette was too proud to surrender herself to him. It was platonic enthusiasm on the one side; trust, friendship, and eager yearning on the other.

In spite of the Queen's inconstancy and flightiness there is every reason to believe that this was the man who really loved her, and we may certainly point to all her helpers and defenders in the hour of need as men whose affection for her was genuine.

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After having dwelt, one by one, on the men who were suspected at the time of being the lovers of this unfortunate Queen, we must turn our attention to one who was recognized as "the man who suffered from an unfortunate attachment for Marie Antoinette."

His name was Castelnaux, and his home was at Bordeaux. For ten years he followed her like a shadow. He moved with the court. Wherever the Queen appeared he was to be seen, standing immovably. In church he was always in sight, and was never absent when the royal pair dined in presence of the people. At the theatre he was as close as possible to the royal box, and at Marie Antoinette's public card parties, which lasted two hours, his eyes were fixed upon her from the moment she arrived until she left.

He went to Fontainebleau, to St. Cloud, or to one of the other castles as soon as he knew of the movements of the Royal Family, and on the arrival of Her Majesty he was the first person she saw as she alighted from her carriage.

Castelnaux never spoke to a soul, he was simply engrossed in the contemplation of the Queen's features. Thin, silent, and wan, with large melancholy eyes, he gave the impression of being slightly insane. But it was impossible to prevent him from meeting and following the Queen with his ardent looks except by arresting him, and Marie Antoinette would not allow this.

He at first frightened her, but afterwards she felt compassion for him, and became accustomed to his presence, which she even missed during her own time of trouble. When she was led away to prison Castelnaux shut himself up in a room in Paris, and there, not wishing to survive the Queen's misfortune, he sought and found death by his own hand.

CHAPTER XV.

Marie Antoinette and Politics.

SINCE the days of Anne of Austria no queen of France had taken any active part in politics. Tradition kept them aloof from affairs of state, and the consorts of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. occupy no place in history.

Marie Antoinette had not the least interest in the subject, and even if she had possessed the necessary ability, it would have been extremely difficult for her to exercise her talents during the early years of the reign of Louis XVI.

Maurepas, who had become Minister on the accession of her husband, had held the office under Louis XIV., and had aided three kings with his counsel. He was a man of great ability, and Louis XVI. looked upon him as indispensable as a leader. The nation, on the contrary, compared him to a windmill that noisily beats the air with its wings, but to very little profit.

He was not a bad man, and his plans for the State were useful, but from the beginning he was hostile to Marie Antoinette. He knew how much she felt she owed to Choiseul, and how earnestly she wished to see him take his place again at the King's council board. He feared this would happen if the Queen had any influence, so that circumstances made it essential for him to rank among her enemies.

But it was only in secret that he opposed the Queen—in her presence he played the part of a devoted subject. When she let it be seen one day that she did not like his influence over the King, he answered in his suave courtier tone:—

"If I displease Your Majesty you have only to request the King to dismiss me. My horses are ready; I can leave at any moment."

The Queen allowed herself to be deceived by his duplicity, and Maurepas remained Minister until his death.

Although the King was now beginning to love his wife, he carefully avoided imparting political secrets to her. It is reported of Maurepas, on good authority, that he encouraged her love of pleasure and rejoiced over her imprudence, because it injured her in the eyes of the people and distracted her thoughts from more important things.

The following fragment of a letter from Marie Antoinette to her brother gives an insight into her connection with French politics during the long years that Maurepas was in power. It was written while Joseph II. was urging her to use her influence to the advantage of her native land:—

"The King is not naturally communicative," she writes, "and it rarely happens that he talks to me about important matters, even when he has not the least intention of hiding them from me. He replies when I ask him a question, but he does not tell me things of his own accord. If I get to know a few details, I have to use all my diplomacy to induce the ministers to tell me the remainder, by making them believe that the King has already told me the whole.

"If I reproach Louis for not having mentioned these things to me, he is not angry; he either looks confused or replies straight out that he had never thought of it. I can clearly see that I have not the least influence over politics. Before my marriage the King's natural distrust was encouraged by his tutor, and Monsieur Vauguyon inspired him with fear of the dominion a wife would gain over him. His sinister nature took pleasure in filling his pupil with false reports, designed to depreciate the house of Austria.

"Although Monsieur Maurepas is less determined and less malicious, he has thought it desirable, for the exercise of his own power, to maintain the King in the same convictions. Monsieur Vergennes also adopts this plan, and probably uses his correspondence about foreign affairs to spread mischief and lies. I have spoken seriously to the King more than once on the subject, and more than once he has replied angrily. As he is not willing to talk to me, I have not been able to convince

him that either his Ministers are misinformed or they are deceiving him. I am not blind with reference to my own influence; I know that about politics especially my power over the King is small indeed. . . ."

The visit of her brother was not simply concerned with the wish to see his sister again and to learn something about France. Some old rights that the house of Habsburg thought to possess had aroused in him the longing to appropriate Lower Bavaria, and the moment seemed favourable to claim the aid of France.

Although they had parted with expressions of mutual esteem, Louis XVI. did not approve of his brother-in-law's political plans. The attempt of Austria to enlarge her borders was, moreover, met by the King of Prussia with the assurance that he would give his support to those already in possession; and when all attempts at mediation proved useless, Frederick the Great marched into Bohemia with a large army in the summer of 1778.

Even Marie Antoinette's own mother, whom she really loved, found it difficult to awaken her interest in politics. But at this crisis Maria Theresa did not appeal in vain to the Queen's filial feelings. She wrote to her not as to a child she was scolding, but an important ally, whom she entreated to further the cause of Austria and watch over the house of Habsburg.

There was no wish in France to break with the house of Austria, but also not the least desire to support this present scheme.

Three anxious months passed with entreaties on the part of Maria Theresa "to save a mother who can do no more." The pressure she used and her despairing letters finally made her daughter quite ill. Marie Antoinette had disputes with the King, and when she appealed to the Ministers she wept and sought by every means to influence them in favour of Austria.

Maria Theresa, who shrank from bloodshed in her latter years, was at the same time using other means to prevent this War of Succession, and it was by the mediation of France and Russia that the disputants were reconciled; but Joseph had to relinquish his claims.

This is the only instance in which the mother's earnest

entreaties seem to have overcome the Queen's personal dislike to politics.

Madame de Polignac had several times proved more influential than Maria Theresa, and drawn her into mischievous interference in the home politics of France.

One of Marie Antoinette's first and most egregious errors was to join the opponents of honest Turgot. He displeased her because he opposed the appointments she wished. She imprudently encouraged court intrigues against him, and finally so worked upon the King that he reluctantly dismissed him.

Malesherbes succeeded Turgot, and the people who began to suspect Louis' indecision blamed the Queen for the dismissal of honourable and capable Ministers.

Maurepas died a month after the birth of the Dauphin, and the King, who had visited him several times during his illness and shown him every mark of sincere attachment, was deeply grieved by his loss. In the streets the refrain was heard :—

> "O France, applaudis—toi de ton sort,
> Un Dauphin vient de naître et Maurepas est mort."

Marie Antoinette's influence became more prominent after the death of the old Minister.

Without bearing the title, Vergennes was the virtual head of the Ministry. He had supported his predecessor in his efforts to prevent the Queen's interference in affairs of state, and was determined to continue the same policy.

But the Polignac clique was more powerful than the statesman. Clever and ambitious courtiers persuaded her to meddle in affairs she could not understand for want of insight and experience. Too ready to accept the views of her friends, and too easily convinced by their arguments, she perceived too late that she was their dupe. Her political activity was neither good for herself nor profitable to the State.

"Alas!" she exclaimed one day to Madame Campan, "I have not been happy since I became a mischief-maker. Yes, it is true, a woman who meddles in things she does not understand—things beyond the limits of her capacity—is nothing better than a mischief-maker."

One main point of which she is accused is the appointment of Calonne to be Minister of Finance—"Contrôleur Général"—which is universally ascribed to Marie Antoinette.

At first she had no particular liking for Calonne, but the crafty courtier had managed to ingratiate himself with financiers, the nobility, and the royal princes.

The Comte d'Artois and the Comtesse de Polignac were enthusiastic about his proposed reforms, while other influential men and women declared that he, and none other, was capable of bringing order into the finances.

Madame de Polignac went to the Queen and begged her to use her influence in favour of Calonne, whom she believed to be a man of extraordinary ability, and Marie Antoinette allowed herself to be again persuaded to listen to the pleadings of her friend.

She soon repented it, and did not hide her displeasure. "I am afraid," she said in Madame de Polignac's salon, "that the financial affairs of the State have passed from the hands of an honest but incapable man into those of a clever schemer."

By means of a new loan Calonne was in a position to act with reckless extravagance. He strained every nerve to gain the favour of the Queen and the higher classes, and by degrees he became a constant guest at Trianon.

Marie Antoinette's distrust vanished. She wished to believe that such a pleasant man in society must be an equally reliable statesman. Whenever she expressed a wish, Calonne used to reply with his diplomatic, courtier smile:—

"If what Your Majesty desires is possible, it is already carried out; if it is impossible, it shall be carried out."

The American war had recently come to an honourable termination. Everything seemed to be secure in the kingdom, and thousands of gold pieces passed from the hands of the generous Finance Minister into those of the Queen, whenever she said she had need of them.

It had been stipulated in her marriage contract that the State should purchase a castle, which was to become her private property. She thought that this was the suitable moment in which to claim the fulfilment of the promise, and cast her eyes

on the Castle of St. Cloud, which belonged to the Orleans family.

Calonne replied to her enquiries that the Treasury could well afford this outlay, and the Castle was purchased for six million francs. But the repairs, the furniture necessary for a new royal residence, and the laying out of the gardens, in which the Queen took a great interest, increased the expenses to as much again.

Calonne's star waned, and a cry of anger broke out over the land at the lavish expenditure of Marie Antoinette. But while the Minister was blamed for the failure of his plans, she was held responsible for his appointment.

The Comtesse de Provence gave her hated sister-in-law the nickname of "Madame Deficit." It was an ill-omened one, for it awoke an echo among the people, and confirmed the belief that she was the cause of their lack of money.

Choiseul died before the dismissal of Calonne, and during his illness the Queen had daily sent to enquire after him. On his death she lost an old friend, whose return to the ministry she had hoped for up to the last.

A week after Calonne was dismissed, Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, became Minister of Finance.

Abbé Vermond, who had been chosen as teacher for Marie Antoinette on his recommendation, had already repeatedly tried to procure him an appointment in the ministry. The King had little wish to see him at the council board, but the Queen, who, thanks to Abbé Vermond, had a high opinion of the Archbishop, had accustomed herself to look upon him as a future leader.

Among the clergy his influence was unbounded. He was a member of the French Academy. The Duc de Choiseul had recommended him to Louis XV., and public opinion envied him the post formerly filled by Fleury, Richelieu, and Mazarin.

Marie Antoinette spoke to the King repeatedly on the subject, and finally persuaded him that it was necessary to appoint Brienne.

They both believed that it was a vital question of safety to the State.

But the Archbishop was evidently not the man to restore peace and content in the land. The disappointment at his inefficiency

was great, and before a year was over he had to resign his post.

He had been immoderately flattered before he became Minister, and after his fall he was blamed with equal exaggeration.

Brienne's appointment was the last public act in which Marie Antoinette exerted her influence before the hatred of the populace broke out in all its fury.

It was not till a later period of her life, when the royal bark was tossed on the tempestuous waves of the Revolution, that it became necessary for her in all seriousness to support its weak helmsman, the King, with her guidance and her counsel.

CHAPTER XVI.

Marie Antoinette as Mother—Madame de Polignac as Gouvernante to the Royal Children—Beaumarchais and his Comedies.

Marie Antoinette felt the importance of her fresh duties as a mother. The unreality of court life had long been burdensome to her, but now its emptiness pained her, as she craved for something more satisfying to her mind.

She renounced many of the pleasures that had formerly occupied her time. It is true that she was still very imprudent —the habits of seven or eight years' standing cannot be discarded in a day—but it was easy to see that she meant to lead a different life.

"I have done wrong," she wrote to the Empress of Austria, after the birth of her first child. "It was foolish and thoughtless of me, but I am more reasonable now."

She knew that her own education had been imperfect, and she was anxious with her own children to avoid the mistakes of Maria Theresa with reference to herself. She became a tender, but at the same time a strict and sensible mother.

As the waves of the Revolution seemed to roll nearer and nearer she applied herself all the more seriously to her work, as she felt that it was she who was responsible for the education of the heirs to the tottering throne of France.

Three years after the birth of the Dauphin (1784) another prince was born to the royal house, who, later on, bore the name of Louis XVII., and had the title of Duke of Normandy. The following year saw the birth of a princess, Sofie Beatrice, who only lived a year.

It seems that it was the birth of the Duke of Normandy that really roused the Queen to a more serious life.

During her most pleasure-seeking days she had rarely forgotten her religious duties, but now she began to confess much more frequently, and to hold long conversations with her father-confessor and other priests.

She sent for her milliner at the same time.

"I shall soon be thirty," she said to Mademoiselle Bertin. "It is not probable that anyone will tell me so, but I have not forgotten the fact."

She instituted a complete reform with reference to her wardrobe, banished all extravagant styles of dressing, and even the use of flowers and feathers.

Her more intimate friends were alarmed at this change in her taste, and began to fear that their influence must yield to that of the priests.

She allowed no pride of birth to take root in her children, and banished everything that could foster arrogance in them. She was especially strict with her eldest daughter, whom she loved, but to whose faults she was not blind.

"My daughter, who is now six years old," she wrote in a letter, "has rather a difficult character, and is intensely proud. She feels far too strongly that the blood of Maria Theresa and Louis XIV. flows in her veins. It is right she should remember it, but only to prove herself worthy of her descent. Gentleness is just as necessary, just as powerful a quality as dignity, and a haughty character is never beloved."

She never allowed the child to give way to caprice.

At ten o'clock every morning the Princess was brought to her mother's room, where teachers were waiting to instruct her till twelve o'clock.

It happened one morning that "Madame Royale" was not disposed to read. She complained of headache, and requested that the master might be dismissed.

"Certainly, my little one," said the Queen. "You shall go to bed, as your head is bad, and you need not dine to-day."

A few hours later the Princess was very hungry, and asked for something to eat.

She was reminded of her headache, and of the command of the Queen that she was to remain in bed without food.

But her hunger became unbearable; she confessed the untruth, and begged her mother's forgiveness.

Marie Antoinette forgave her, but she insisted that she should not lose the lesson she had tried to escape.

When the time for her daughter's confirmation was approaching she had her instructed with different young girls of her own age, and would not allow the least distinction to be made between them.

"My children have always been taught to trust me, and to tell me when they do wrong," Marie Antoinette wrote to Madame de Tourzel. "This is why I seem more distressed than angry at what they have done when I am scolding them. I have allowed them to understand that either 'yes' or 'no' is irrevocable when I have said it; but I always give a reason, suited to their age, that they may never believe that I am capricious in my decisions."

The Princesse de Guéménée, of whom we have already spoken, was the first gouvernante to the little royal children.

Her husband was at one time possessed of a large fortune, but the boundless extravagance of himself and his wife had brought them to the verge of bankruptcy, and he had long been borrowing at usurious interest on the one hand to cover pressing claims on the other.

Early in the eighties his position was untenable. He could pay nothing more, and his bankruptcy caused a painful sensation, as it also brought about the ruin of numbers of small tradesmen, servants, and artisans, who had trusted the man of rank with their last hardly-earned shilling.

His wife could not possibly be retained as gouvernante to the royal children after this scandal, and the Queen at once turned to Madame de Polignac as a suitable person to replace her.

Her friend shrank from the responsibility of the appointment; she was, moreover, aware of the jealousy to which she would be exposed, and of the number of fresh enemies she would create for herself, if she accepted the office.

But her relations urged her to yield to the Queen's entreaties.

The appointment was made, and Marie Antoinette's favourite was promoted by this step to the highest position of power and

influence. Her residence was not the modest suite of apartments which former gouvernantes had been accustomed to occupy, but it was a magnificent castle, the usual residence of Her Majesty. "Here I am myself," the Queen used to say. She spent whole days with her friend, and commanded that the nobility should assemble there. In this way the home of Madame de Polignac became the rendezvous for all the great of the land, the Ministers, and the Ambassadors. There was only one thing missing, and that was the royal guard. Their absence alone showed that these salons were not literally those of the King and Queen.

The position of the favourite was not without its discomforts, though it is true that, especially in the beginning, Marie Antoinette divided her affection fairly equally between her children and their gouvernante.

The delicacy of the elder Prince added considerably to the duties of Madame de Polignac, who was in constant anxiety concerning the health of the heir to the throne.

The little Prince, who had formerly been so quick and lively, had become thin, wan, and deformed. One shoulder was higher than the other, a hump had formed on his back, and he had already lost all the brightness and buoyancy of childhood. His mother, who had been so proud of her child, hid him from the eyes of strangers, for the future wearer of a crown who could not bear his own weight was but too often a subject for ridicule.

Madame de Polignac was selfish in many respects, but it must be said in her praise that she spared no pains in her care for the suffering and exacting Prince, and tried to prevent the occurrence of anything that might distress the child, whose days seemed to be numbered.

His tutor, the Duc de Harcourt, and his wife were filled with jealousy of Madame de Polignac, and excited the hatred of the young Prince towards his mother's friend. Young as he was, he ordered her to leave the room in which he was. He would take nothing from her hand, and listened to her remonstrances with the most utter contempt.

The gouvernante complained bitterly about the persecution of the Harcourt family, and the dissension between them was a

source of great grief to Marie Antoinette, who did her best to pacify her son, and made herself a perfect slave to his caprices.

She would most probably have succeeded in restoring the Dauphin's confidence in Madame de Polignac, if an abominable slander had not turned away the heart of the child from his mother.

Her enemies spread the shameful report that, in consequence of the bodily infirmities of her elder son, the Queen had transferred all her affection to her second boy, who was stronger and perfectly made.

Harcourt maliciously used this lie for his own evil ends. He persuaded the Prince not to eat or drink anything that had not been examined by the doctors, and hinted that the women who were in closest attendance on him were seeking to shorten his days.

These scandalous suggestions had such an influence on the delicate, excitable, nervous system of the little Dauphin, that after a time he never saw his mother without screaming.

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The most powerful families in the land had cooled in their affection towards the Queen from the moment that she had raised the Polignacs, poor and provincial, but of noble descent, to posts to which they, as of higher birth, considered themselves entitled. The aristocracy never forgave her the slight to them, when she selected as her intimate friends those whom they looked upon as immeasurably beneath them.

As they were not invited to Trianon, they did not care to go to Versailles. The nobility withdrew, the royal Castle was deserted, for few considered it their duty to attend.

The ladies-in-waiting, who were no longer needed except on Sundays and festivals, vented their wrath in slander, not only about the elect who had access to Marie Antoinette's private circle, but especially about their Queen who dispensed her favours so unjustly, with so much partiality. Court officials, and those who had business at Versailles, were the only people present, even on Sundays, when the King met his Ministers.

The little town which had been the scene of Louis XIV.'s

triumphs, and to which all Europe pressed to study chivalry and polite manners, was at the close of Louis XVI.'s reign not much better than a village, which people left as quickly as possible when their necessary business was accomplished. On a week-day the gardens, the ante-rooms, and the inner apartments, where gay crowds had formerly moved about, looked so deserted that a stranger might have thought the King was not there.

But ambition and avarice were as prominent as ever, only instead of appealing direct to the King and Queen, applicants turned with their cringing petitions to those who were then enjoying the royal favour.

Those who had rejoiced on the accession of Louis XVI. now declared that he had neither the virtues nor the tastes of a king. But Marie Antoinette was more bitterly hated, for she had contributed far more than her husband to set aside what the people liked and had been accustomed to.

Le Mariage de Figaro, by Beaumarchais, which in its original form was full of satire against the royal house, strengthened every class all over the kingdom in their unfavourable opinion of Marie Antoinette.

The poet begged in vain that his play might be performed, but the King was persistent in his refusal. His opposition, however, only served to stimulate curiosity, and people were at length determined to hear it read in their own drawing-rooms.

In spite of the King's prohibition, Beaumarchais had the assurance to declare that it should be performed, even if it were in Notre Dame itself.

The Comte de Provence greatly admired the piece, and laughed loudly as it was read to him, not even caring that his merriment was heard below in the street, while the Comte d'Artois incessantly repeated:—

"It is only small minds that fear small writings," an expression that occurs in the piece.

The Queen could not conceive why her husband should attach such importance to the performance of a play, and the higher classes, who wished to see themselves depicted, were eager for the representation of a comedy portraying the foibles of the day.

Louis ended by yielding to the pressure of public opinion. Everybody was delighted, and immoderately eager to see *Le Mariage de Figaro.*

"It will be a failure," remarked a gentleman to the actress Sofie Arnould before the first representation.

"Then it will be a failure fifty days following," replied the famous artiste.

She was right: it was played not on fifty, but on one hundred consecutive nights, and from eight o'clock in the morning people stood in long rows outside the theatre waiting to buy their tickets.

"There is one thing which is madder than my play," said Beaumarchais, "and that is the success it has had."

It was full of malice against the higher classes, and ambiguous insult to the royal house. In a moment of exasperation the King sent Beaumarchais, not to the Bastille, but to St. Lazare, which was much more humiliating.

Public opinion thought this unjust, and Louis repented of his hastiness. Marie Antoinette, wishing to compensate the author for the wrong done to him, determined that his next piece should be played at Trianon, and that she herself would take part in it, with Beaumarchais as director. This was a triumph for him, but intense imprudence on the part of the Queen. In spite of the small number of spectators who were present at the performance of *Le Barbier de Séville*, there were more than enough to spread the details, and it was remarkable to hear a royal prince,* certainly in joke, but on the Queen's own stage, utter bitter reproaches against the nobility, and even the King, of France.

A dangerous party had long been forming against the Queen at the very foot of the throne itself, and the enmity of the old nobility at the time when other classes were intriguing against their rulers had weakened the royal power to defend its rights. Blind and egotistical as they were, the aristocracy could not see that the grave they were digging for their Queen was opening for themselves, and that every blow against Marie Antoinette was shaking, not only the throne, but even their own privileges.

* The Comte d'Artois played Figaro.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Necklace.

THE smouldering disaffection of 1785 resulted in an attack on the dignity of the Queen, which drove her enemies to unite and show themselves openly.

The chief characters in the famous diamond necklace episode, which ushered in the misfortunes of Marie Antoinette, are the Comtesse de la Motte-Valois, and Louis, Prince de Rohan, priest and cardinal.

The Comtesse de la Motte, a very attractive and clever, but intensely artful woman, maintained that she was a descendant of the house of Valois, through the Baron St. Rémy, an illegitimate son of Henri II. But her high birth had not prevented her mother from running away with a soldier, and her father ended his miserable existence in the workhouse.

Johanne Saint-Rémy Valois had come to Paris to beg for charity, when she was found by a benevolent lady, who kindly had her trained as a seamstress, and finally took her into her own house.

The young girl fled from her benefactress under the pretext that she had been grossly insulted. Circumstances, however, made it advisable for her to marry Comte de la Motte, a man of loathsome appearance and disreputable character, who was moreover steeped in debt.

Without possessing fortune or friends, proud of her family name, but humiliated by poverty, Madame de la Motte dragged out her miserable existence in discontent and penury.

She strained every nerve to obtain the favour of the great, and sent petitions in every direction.

One day she would go to Versailles, another to Luciennes,

where Madame du Barry was then living, thus besieging by turns the mistress of the deceased King and the courtiers of the reigning sovereign, without practical result in either quarter.

She begged Madame du Barry to allow her to fill the post of companion, not forgetting to tell her she was a Valois; but the Countess sent word that the Mistress of Luciennes was not of sufficiently high rank to take a lady of such noble birth into her service.

Madame de la Motte gained admittance to the ante-room of the Duchesse de Provence, and pretended to faint; but even this comedy was unavailing to fill her empty purse.

The adventuress once tried to force her way to Her Majesty's carriage during a procession, but the short-sighted Queen passed on without seeing her, or even her outstretched hand. Marie Antoinette could therefore maintain with truth that she did not know Madame de la Motte, and that she had never even seen her.

The second chief character in the story of the diamond necklace, Prince Louis de Rohan, belonged to one of the most renowned families in France, and had been appointed envoy at the Austrian court shortly after the marriage of Marie Antoinette.

It would have been difficult to make a more unsuitable choice. His knowledge was defective in every department, he was incapable as a diplomatist, and personally objectionable to Maria Theresa on account of his instability and immorality.

Rohan calculated on dazzling Vienna by the display of luxury and extravagance, but his lavishness was disapproved of at court, and he rarely obtained a private audience with the Empress, who expressed her opinion unreservedly about his conduct, both as a priest and a diplomatist.

Difficulties soon arose, and this empty show was but of short continuance.

In order to get money, Rohan abused the power he had as envoy, and even smuggled with such audacity that the Austrian Government was obliged to withdraw the privilege of exemption from duty on his account. In the course of a single year more silk materials were sold from the Embassy than in Paris and Lyons together.

One of the first steps taken by Louis XVI. on his accession was to recall Rohan from Vienna, and then to refuse to receive him on his return.

Marie Antoinette did not address a single word to him. She could not conquer an anxious presentiment that this man would work her mischief, though by what means she could not possibly foresee. But never has any fact been more clearly proved than her deep, persistent aversion towards the Cardinal.

Abbé Georgel mentions in his *Mémoires* a cause for the Queen's intense dislike. During his stay in Vienna, Rohan had written as follows in a private letter to the Duc d'Aiguillon :—

"I have seen Maria Theresa weep over the misfortunes of the down-trodden Poles. This sovereign, who is skilled in the art of disguising her sentiments, seems to shed tears at any moment; but while she uses her handkerchief with one hand to dry her eyes, she holds the sword of diplomacy in the other to assure to herself a share in the booty."

The letter was meant for the Minister alone, but, with unpardonable thoughtlessness, he confided it to Madame du Barry. The King's mistress disliked the Empress, probably because she was the mother of Marie Antoinette.

During one of those luxurious réunions, to which only the most intimate favourites of Louis XV. were admitted, his mistress ridiculed what she called "Maria Theresa's duplicity or hypocrisy," and in order to prove her statement she took the Cardinal's letter from her pocket.

"Listen to Prince Louis' description of the Empress," she exclaimed, and read the above paragraph aloud.

After all, all those who were present felt sure that the envoy was in correspondence with Madame du Barry, and some of his secret enemies hastened to acquaint the Dauphiness of the fact.

"Is it possible that a prince of the Church is exchanging letters with a fallen woman?" exclaimed Marie Antoinette angrily, "and that he utilizes this correspondence to malign my noble mother, who is goodness itself, in this abominable manner."

The house of Rohan Soubise, which from generation to generation had been attached to the French court, reached its zenith of power and distinction in the time of Louis XV.

Marshal Soubise was the head of the family, and the Comtesse de Marsan, whom we have already mentioned, was his sister and aunt to Prince Louis Rohan. The Princesse de Guéménée also belonged to the same family.

The diplomatist had barely returned from Vienna after his disgrace than his family united to procure him fresh honours and emoluments. They defied the coolness of the Queen and the displeasure of the King with such persistency that they finally gained their point. He was made an archbishop, court chaplain (grand aumônier de France), and, at the request of the King of Poland, the Pope created him a cardinal.

The young Queen used all her influence to dissuade the King from appointing him a court chaplain, but her power at this time was very slight, and the family of Rohan Soubise triumphed over the weak and vacillating King.

Marie Antoinette wrote the following about Rohan's appointment (1777) in a letter to her mother:—

"I entirely share my dear mother's opinion about Prince Louis, whom I suspect of the worst intentions, and consider dangerous on account of his designing character. If I could have prevented it, he should not have had the smallest appointment here. However, the post of chaplain will not bring him much into contact with me, neither will he frequently have the opportunity of speaking to the King, whom he will not see except at levées and in church."

Cardinal Rohan was not only extremely shallow and extravagant, but inordinately vain. Treated with marked coolness by Marie Antoinette, received with scant courtesy when he waited on the King, humiliated in his high position, and his ambition as a courtier ignored, he understood but too well that as long as he was in disgrace with the Queen he was deprived of all power and influence. He exerted himself to the utmost to gain her favour and wrote letter after letter to her, which she did not even deign to open.

In spite of his own efforts and the exertions of his family on his behalf, he was never honoured with one word or one look from Her Majesty. All the memoirs of the period, as well as every detail connected with the necklace story, confirm the truth of this

statement. But the prelate was not to be deterred by the futility of his efforts. On the contrary, Marie Antoinette's coolness only increased his ardour, till it became an ungovernable passion.

The Comtesse de la Motte unhappily crossed his path at this juncture, and though his position as a priest ought to have precluded intimacy with the adventuress, she succeeded in a very short time in gaining his confidence.

She told him of her pecuniary difficulties, and he gave her money for her most pressing needs. Then she discovered without effort his burning desire to become intimate with the Queen, though it was not till after they had been acquainted for a couple of years that she told the Cardinal that Marie Antoinette was her friend, and that she was distressed to find how misfortunes had overwhelmed a descendant of Henri II. She said that the Queen could not bear the thought that a lady of the house of Valois should be in such misery, and was generously assisting her, besides honouring her with her friendship. She maintained that she was allowed secret meetings with the Queen, who often begged the Comtesse to execute private commissions for her.

Although the Cardinal himself was in disgrace, his powerful family connections would have made it easy for him to ascertain the truth of these statements. But this never seems to have occurred to him, and in the meantime he believed the Countess.

To complete her deception she showed him letters full of kindness, which she said were written by the Queen, containing "My dear Comtesse," "My dear heart," and similar friendly and tender expressions. The Comtesse pretended to be quite touched by the generosity of the Cardinal towards her in her poverty, and assured him that she was prepared to use her influence on his behalf. After a time she assumed the character of his protectress.

Her plan was laid, and she followed it out with discretion and perseverance worthy of a better cause.

Rohan was charmed, and his temptress kept him in good spirits, assuring him that Marie Antoinette's prejudice against him was gradually disappearing, and that she would at last consent to receive a written explanation from him.

With Madame de la Motte as intermediary a supposed corres-

pondence between Her Majesty and himself was begun. Rohan's letters were full of gratitude and enthusiasm. The Queen's were also very friendly, and were written by a former police officer, a friend of Monsieur de la Motte, who undertook the trouble of imitating Marie Antoinette's handwriting.

Rohan had not the least suspicion, he was blinded by hope. There was only one thing wanting to crown his happiness—he longed to hear from the Queen's own mouth the words of forgiveness that had been repeated again and again in her letters.

The Comtesse de la Motte was somewhat puzzled by this request, but the Cardinal was so persistent that she finally promised him a personal interview with Her Majesty. The meeting was not to take place in the Castle at Versailles, but in the garden; not at one of the usual receptions, but some evening.

Rohan was happy. He walked patiently up and down in the park, one evening after another, anticipating the moment which was to crown his bliss.

Late one evening the Comtesse came to him and said, "Be quick; the Queen allows you to approach."

The Cardinal hastened after the Countess, who showed him the way to a dark path bordered by a hedge. Here he saw a lady dressed in white, who handed him a rose as she murmured, "You know what this means." At the same moment a man hastened towards them.

"Look," he whispered, "there are the Duchesse de Provence and the Duchesse d'Artois coming this way."

"Hasten, hasten," cried Madame de la Motte, and the lady disappeared behind the hedge; but the Cardinal remained, convinced that he had seen Marie Antoinette and had heard her voice.

He knelt on the grass which the supposed Queen had pressed, covered it with burning kisses, and returned home, simply intoxicated with joy.

"That bewitching rose," he wrote the following day to Marie Antoinette, "is on my heart. I shall keep it all my life, and it will continually recall to me the first hour of my happiness."

The Countess took his glowing letter in order to give it to the

Queen. She and her husband read it together, enjoyed themselves heartily at the expense of the too credulous Cardinal, and threw the paper into the fire, which had already consumed so many previous communications. The deluded priest never suspected the duplicity of Madame de la Motte. He had always been kind and sympathising towards her, and could not think that she was plotting his further disgrace.

The renowned quack, Cagliostro, whom many people looked upon as a supernatural being, and in whom Rohan placed great confidence, had moreover told him that this correspondence would bring about his promotion to the very highest position, and that power and fortune depended on his silence and patience.

It is easy to guess that the woman whom he had seen in the park was certainly not Marie Antoinette.

While Rohan was besieging Madame de la Motte with entreaties to help in bringing about a meeting with the Queen, her husband had noticed in the streets a woman whose features recalled those of Her Majesty. He followed her and made her acquaintance, when he learnt that she was Mademoiselle le Guay, a chorus-singer in one of the minor theatres in Paris, a girl of doubtful reputation, known under the name of Oliva in the society which she frequented.

After about a week's interval, the Count went to see her in her own home, and told her that a lady in a very high position wished to see her, and intimated that a meeting between them would shortly be arranged.

The same evening Madame de la Motte herself visited the girl in her garret.

"My dear," she said, "you do not know me, but I beg you to trust me. I am connected with the court; in fact, I am the Queen's right hand, and possess her entire confidence. She has deputed me to find a lady who would be willing to do her a service when the time comes, and I have thought of you. If you will oblige me I will give you 15,000 francs, and you may expect a still more valuable gift from the Queen."

To prove the truth of these words she showed her the forged letters which had already induced the Cardinal to believe in the friendship of Marie Antoinette for the Comtesse de la Motte.

They convinced Oliva that one of Her Majesty's intimate friends had condescended to enter her humble dwelling.

The stranger spoke of services required of her in the highest quarters, which naturally surprised this low-born girl, though she was delighted at the honour that had been shown her.

It was arranged that Count de la Motte was to fetch her with a carriage next day, and accompany her to Versailles.

He arrived at the appointed time, and with him Marc-Anton Rétaux de Villette, the accomplice in the plot, whom we have already seen.

They drove to Versailles, where the Countess had preceded them with her maid, and alighted at the hotel in which she generally stayed.

The two gentlemen disappeared for a moment, but returned quickly to tell Oliva that the Queen was delighted that she had come, and was impatient to see her the next day.

"What am I to do?" asked Oliva.

"You will know to-morrow," was the mysterious answer.

The meeting between Rohan and the supposed Queen was fixed for the next day, and the descendant of Henri of Valois prepared this girl for the occasion with her own hands. She dressed her in a white gown over a pale pink under-skirt, arranged her hair in the style the Queen was then wearing, threw a little white cloak over her shoulders, and finally placed a letter in her hand.

"I shall accompany you into the Castle garden," she said. "A gentleman in a very high position will approach you. Give him this letter and a rose, as you say to him:—

"'You know what this means.' That is all that will be required of you."

The meeting in the garden took place as we have related, but in her confusion Oliva forgot to give the letter she held in her hand.

She hastened away, satisfied that she had been able to render the Queen a service and to enjoy herself so much at the same time. She spent the remainder of the night with riotous companions in a neighbouring public-house, and does not appear to have given any further thought to the comedy in which she had acted a part.

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The Comtesse de la Motte's task was finished, and she could at last enjoy the fruits of her labours.

A month after the mysterious meeting the Cardinal received a letter from Marie Antoinette, in which she expressed the wish for 60,000 francs, which she wanted to use for benevolent purposes. The Queen's wish was a command for him. He gave the money to Madame de la Motte, his usual messenger, who still possessed his unshaken confidence.

Instead of the 15,000 francs which she had promised, the Countess only gave 4000 to Oliva, though she assured her that she had acted to the entire satisfaction of Her Majesty. The remainder, by far the larger part of the amount, was used for the support of the la Motte family.

Three months later the supposed Queen was again in pecuniary difficulties and begged this time for 100,000 francs, which the Cardinal paid without delay.

The la Motte family began to live in magnificent style, increased their staff of servants, and bought horses and carriages, while the report of the friendly relationship in which the Countess stood to Her Majesty spread rapidly in every quarter.

* * * * * *

We now come to the other part of the story.

The court jewellers, Böhmer and Bassange, had made a necklace of diamonds which they valued at 1,600,000 francs. Of course they did not expect to sell it to any but a royal person, and as they were aware of Marie Antoinette's taste for good jewels, they hoped that she would purchase the necklace.

One of the courtiers undertook to show it to the King. The Queen had just presented him with their first child, and Louis would have liked to make her the present to mark the occasion.

Marie Antoinette examined it and thought it very beautiful, but would not have it. The American war was just beginning, and she rightly maintained that it was far more essential to buy a man-of-war than a necklace.

The jewellers sent the ornament to most of the European courts, but all were alarmed at the prohibitory price, and it remained unsold.

In despair that he could not realize the large sum, Böhmer begged Marie Antoinette for an audience.

He threw himself on his knees before her and wept, and entreated her to purchase the necklace.

"Madame," he exclaimed, "I am a ruined man, I am dishonoured if you do not buy it. I cannot survive such a misfortune. I shall drown myself when I leave you."

"Rise, Böhmer," said the Queen severely. "I did not order you to make this ornament. The King would give it to me, but I refuse it. Never mention the matter to me again. Take the diamonds out and try to sell them separately, but do not talk of drowning yourself."

Her little daughter was present, and Marie Antoinette added:—

"I am very angry that you should behave thus in the presence of my child. Never allow yourself to do such a thing again. Go!"

Böhmer retired, and for a long time was seen no more in Versailles.

Then he heard of the intimacy which, according to report, existed between Marie Antoinette and the Comtesse de la Motte. He saw the latter and tried to persuade her to use all her influence to induce Her Majesty to purchase the costly necklace.

The Countess asked the jeweller to allow her to see the ornament, and he brought it to her the next day.

In the meanwhile she made no promises, and Böhmer began to fear that this last step would prove as useless as his previous attempt.

Then, after an interval of three weeks, she told him that the Queen had decided to purchase it, but that she did not wish to negotiate with him personally. A statesman of high rank would communicate with him and conclude the transaction.

A few days later Rohan went to him to act on the Queen's behalf.

They came to terms about the price of the necklace, which was fixed at 1,600,000 francs. The Queen was to pay the amount in five instalments, with an interval of six months between each one. In the meantime Marie Antoinette did not wish her name to

appear as the purchaser, but commanded perfect silence respecting the transaction.

When the bargain was concluded Rohan produced a receipt signed :—

"Received,
Marie Antoinette of France."

The signature and the letters to the Cardinal in which the Queen acquainted him with her wishes respecting the necklace were written by Madame de la Motte's former accomplice, Rétaux de Villette.

On other occasions Böhmer had always done business with the Queen herself, and he did not know her handwriting. The Cardinal was of far too high rank and position to allow of suspicion without very good grounds. The jeweller, therefore, confidently gave his diamonds into the hands of a dignitary of the Church.

Rohan drove to Versailles the same evening, accompanied by his valet, carrying the casket with its precious contents.

He went at once to Madame de la Motte, who had again taken up her quarters in her usual hotel.

Hardly had he entered when a messenger arrived with a letter in his hand. The Countess took it, read it, and exclaimed :—

"It is from the Queen."

The man who had brought it was said to be one of the court lacqueys, and the Cardinal really recognized him as the person who had been present in the garden the previous year when he had had that nocturnal meeting with Her Majesty.

The royal servant, who was of course none other than Rétaux de Villette, went out but soon returned. The Cardinal saw with his own eyes that the Countess gave the ornament to him, and he never doubted for a moment that it finally reached the hands of Marie Antoinette.

The following day there was a grand fête at court, and the jeweller hastened out to Versailles to see the Queen wearing the diamond necklace. Rohan also drove there to see her with the jewels she had procured through his intervention.

They placed themselves in the path of the Royal Family, but a great disappointment awaited them both. Marie Antoinette, who

passed them magnificently dressed, was only wearing her old jewels.

Böhmer was surprised that she had given herself so much trouble to procure a necklace which she did not mean to wear. The Cardinal, too, was rather perplexed, but the loving letters he continued to receive quickly consoled him for a time.

Months went by. Other fêtes took place, but Marie Antoinette never wore the famous necklace. She came to Paris for the christening of the Duc de Normandie, but even on this occasion she did not wear it.

She met the Cardinal, but treated him with the same coolness and contempt as before. He could not understand her capricious behaviour, but still no suspicion ever entered his mind.

In the meantime the Countess, her husband, and their accomplice had taken the necklace to pieces and sold the diamonds, partly in London and partly in Paris.

The couple had already begun to live as rich people, but now they launched out into unlimited luxury and extravagance. Madame de la Motte squandered money on all sides. She filled her house with treasures, and her caskets with diamonds and pearls. She bought a lovely villa by the seaside, but when Rohan visited her he found her in a miserable garret home; and when she left the city in the summer she made him believe that she was going to some poor relations in the country.

One day when Böhmer met the Cardinal the latter reproached him for not having expressed his thanks to the Queen, and the jeweller hastened to repair his fault.

When he was sending his bill for some small present she had bought, he enclosed a note in which he thanked her for the larger order he had recently executed.

He concluded with these words:—"We feel genuine satisfaction in the knowledge that the handsomest collection of diamonds in existence is in the possession of the most beautiful and best of queens."

Marie Antoinette thought that Böhmer was out of his mind. She burnt the letter, and determined to have no more business transactions with the madman.

The day for the payment of the first instalment drew nearer

and nearer. He came, but the Queen did not pay. The Countess brought the Cardinal instead a much less sum in Her Majesty's name, with a petition that he would effect a temporary postponement.

Quite by accident Böhmer's partner, Bassange, became acquainted with the Queen's genuine handwriting. He compared it with the signature on the receipt in possession of the firm, and detected the difference.

The difficulties that had arisen with reference to payment had made him uneasy, but the sight of Marie Antoinette's own handwriting had aroused increased anxiety.

While Böhmer again hastened to Versailles to see the Queen, Bassange hurried off to Madame de la Motte, and threatened her with such proceedings that at length brought her to burn her ships.

The bow that had been strained too tight had to snap at last, but the Countess was prepared. She considered this the favourable moment, and let it snap with the most smiling of faces.

Her plan was straightforward and its execution easy.

"The Cardinal pays for the necklace," she argued, "it is therefore of the greatest importance to him to hide his stupidity and his credulity. He must use every means to avoid the publicity of a transaction which would result in his banishment from court and render him ridiculous for ever."

She confessed to the jeweller that he was the victim of a fraud, and that the Queen's signature was a forgery. But she pacified him with reference to the consequences of the deception by impressing upon him that Rohan was bound on his honour—moreover, compelled—to pay for the necklace to ensure silence on the part of the jewellers.

Leaving Bassange standing there at his wits' end, the enterprising Countess hastened to her clerical friend and entreated him to protect her against the Queen, who, she persisted, had ordered the necklace to be purchased, but denied having received it.

The prelate now began to discern the abyss into which he had fallen, but still he would not believe the whole truth. He had heard the Queen's voice and had kissed her hand in that

dim light in the garden; then all the incidents of the last year, the warm and friendly letters he had received, could not be mere creations of his own brain.

His family, to whom he had not confided his supposed intimacy with Marie Antoinette, knew nothing about his despair and anxiety. But he again consulted Cagliostro, hoping that his friend would be able to enlighten him.

Far from comforting him, Cagliostro confirmed his anxious suspicions, and advised him to confess everything to the King, or to seek an interview with Böhmer and Bassange as quickly as possible.

In the meantime Böhmer had tried, for the second or third time, to gain admittance at Versailles.

Marie Antoinette was at Trianon, but he saw one of her ladies, who assured him that Her Majesty had not understood one word of his mysterious letter.

He hurried away to Trianon. The Queen was busy rehearsing her part in *Le Barbier de Séville*, and either could not, or would not, receive him there.

On her return to Versailles she gathered from the lady that Böhmer was not out of his mind, as she believed, but that he had been shamefully duped.

A few days later she sent for him, when the entire plot was brought to light.

The Cardinal was then summoned. This was August 15th, 1785.

The whole court had congregated in the hall when he appeared, wearing his priestly robes.

He was ushered into the King's study, where the Queen also was awaiting him.

Ten years had passed since the last time he had had the opportunity of looking closely at the real Marie Antoinette.

He compared her with the woman he had seen in the garden, and lost all self-possession. The Queen had become stouter in the long interval, and her face was more oval in form than that of Mademoiselle Oliva.

He shuddered from head to foot, and could hardly speak distinctly.

"Who ordered you to buy a necklace for the Queen of France?" asked the King.

"Your Majesty," stammered the Cardinal, "I see, too late, that I have been deceived."

"What have you done with the necklace?" asked the King further.

"I thought the Queen had received it."

"Who gave you the commission to buy it?"

"A lady named la Motte-Valois, who brought me a letter from the Queen. I thought I was rendering Her Majesty a service by executing her commission."

"You thought you were rendering me a service," exclaimed the Queen, beside herself with anger—"me, who, since your arrival here at court, have never addressed a single word to you? What could have led you to believe that I should make use of a bishop to do errands that belong to my servants' duties?"

"I understand that I have been duped," repeated the Cardinal. "I will pay for the necklace. I was blinded by the wish to serve Your Majesty, and I suspected no treachery."

He then took from his pocket-book the document which bore the supposed signature of the Queen.

"This resembles neither the handwriting nor the signature of Her Majesty," said the King, as he examined the receipt.

"How is it possible that a Prince de Rohan, the highest ecclesiastic in the land, can believe that the Queen signs herself 'Marie Antoinette of France'! Everybody knows that a queen merely signs her Christian name.

"I am compelled, though reluctantly, to consider you guilty," he continued, "and I demand an apology from your hand. Go into the adjoining room, where you will find ink and paper."

Rohan obeyed, but in his confusion and agitation he was hardly able to write a legible line.

He returned at the end of a quarter of an hour with a paper in his hand, which the King took and said:—

"I now inform you that you will be imprisoned."

"Sire," exclaimed the Cardinal, "I must always obey your commands, but spare me from being arrested in my priestly robes, and before the eyes of the court."

"It must be so," answered the King sternly, and left the room.

In broad daylight, in the royal castle, the Cardinal was arrested and conducted to the Bastille.

But before this he had found an opportunity of sending a message to his private secretary, Abbé Georgel, with orders to burn his letters, and especially those that he had received from the Comtesse de la Motte.

They were already burnt when the Commissioner of Police arrived to seal his papers.

The King's counsellor, the Comte de Vergennes, who knew that many of the nobility would make strenuous efforts to save their kinsman, wished to hush up such an unheard-of scandal. But the Queen demanded the light of publicity, and she had the King and the other Ministers on her side. In the first instance, she was only angry with Rohan, and believed that he had formed the plot in order to effect her downfall.

It was not long after the imprisonment of the Cardinal before the Comtesse de la Motte was found, and she, her husband, and Rétaux de Villette were brought to justice.

Cagliostro and a few more of Rohan's friends were also arrested, and the girl who had personated Her Majesty was also imprisoned.

Can we picture the sensation caused by this incident? A Prince de Rohan sent to the Bastille; a Cardinal accused of unlawfully appropriating a necklace? Astonishment was universal, but anger, too, prevailed on all sides.

The nobility were indignant at this proceeding against one of their prominent members, and the priesthood bewailed the imprisonment of their chief dignitary.

The Queen's most intimate friends leagued together against her, and the members of the Royal Family, aunts, brothers, and sisters-in-law, loudly blamed Louis and Marie Antoinette for the step they had taken.

All who were opposed to sovereign supremacy, those who were discontented or jealous, the Cardinal's friends, and Marie Antoinette's enemies united against the Queen.

The Comtesse de Noailles, the conscientious "Madame Etiquette," took advantage of the opportunity to express her long-

concealed hatred. She sided openly with the opponents of her former mistress, and exerted herself to defend Rohan. Madame de Marsan and Madame de Guéménée also joined the party of his relations. They wore mourning, and appealed beseechingly to the judge on his behalf.

There was hardly a noble family in the land that did not consider themselves aggrieved by these proceedings against the Cardinal.

His own family and their dependants took care that sympathy with the accused should be shared even by the very lowest of the people; but their influence was little needed, as Marie Antoinette was already so hated that many were only too delighted to have a cause for vilifying her the more.

The Queen's name played a chief part in the scandal, in which she really was the most prominent character. History has exonerated her from every connection with Madame de la Motte; but the people who knew her former extraordinary friendships, and blamed her lavish expenditure, firmly believed that Rohan and Madame de la Motte were made to suffer in order to cover her delinquencies.

The Cardinal, who had acted like a fool, was looked upon as a scapegoat. He had involved the Queen in a disreputable transaction, and that was sufficient to render him popular. When he entered the court he was received with respect and honour, not treated as a culprit, but as a prince, almost as a ruler.

Songs were sung about the streets in his praise, one of the verses of which ran thus:—

"Notre Saint Père l'a rougi;
Le roi, la reine l'ont noirci,
Le parlement le blanchira,
Alleluia!"

Another verse was less flattering:—

"Oliva dit qu'il est dindon;
La Motte dit qu'il est fripon;
Lui se proclame un vrai bêta,
Alleluia!"

Even the fashions of the day were connected with the story of the Queen's necklace. Ladies began to wear cardinal hats, and to

adorn themselves with red and yellow striped ribbons, which they called "The Cardinal on his straw pallet."

The Comtesse de la Motte, who began by denying every point and laughing at the Cardinal's stupidity, was flogged and branded with the letter V ("Voleuse"), besides being condemned to imprisonment for life. She behaved as an insane woman in "La Salpêtrière," where she was confined, and managed to arouse such universal interest and sympathy that after the course of a few years she was assisted to escape to England.

Her husband and Rétaux de Villette were condemned to hard labour for life.

Cagliostro was banished from France.

Mademoiselle Oliva was set free, as an innocent tool in the plot.

The Cardinal was acquitted, and led in triumph from the court. He was undoubtedly innocent as regards the deception that had been practised, but he was guilty of high treason for alleging that Marie Antoinette had made an appointment with him at night.

It was this crime that gained for him the sympathy of the people, and the real victim in the episode of the necklace was not he, but the Queen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Threatening Clouds—Increasing Hatred of the People.

No wall is so high that scandal cannot climb over it, no corner so hidden that it cannot creep into it, no lock so firm that it cannot open it.

Scandal and slander walk triumphantly through the land, they dance in the castle halls, they dog the footsteps of the poor woman in the streets, and find an entrance everywhere.

They sneak even into the vaults of the dead, and bid defiance to the golden crowns and rusty swords that rest upon the tomb. Time wears away the inscription from the gilded sarcophagus, about which the spider spins her web; and slander, as it hisses round the memory of the dead, seems endowed with "endless life."

For years slander had been unceasingly circling round the Queen of France in a thousand different forms. First, in satirical songs, then in newspaper articles, or pamphlets of a cowardly defamatory nature, had become like a novel, read not only in France, but in every court of Europe. Everything was turned into a weapon against her: her country, her descent, her family, her beauty, her friendships, and even her tastes.

The ground was prepared and the moment was favourable for attacks from every quarter, for which the episode of the necklace had given the signal, and a new series of libels, coarsely assailing her virtue, came into circulation. Impure reports were spread broadcast over the land; she was more maligned than any beautiful envied woman has ever been, more persecuted than any other hated queen. Libellous pamphlets were hidden under the King's napkin at table, he heard his family and courtiers murmur accusations against his wife, and saw from their looks how they pitied him as a husband.

Scandal forced its way through all classes. From its source, at the foot of the throne, it spread to the castles of the nobility, to the salons of the literary, down to the lowest strata of the capital. It strode like a pestilence through the land, openly now, where it had formerly crept in darkness.

Accusations against Marie Antoinette were printed in hundreds of thousands and distributed in the towns and villages of the land, even by the help of the very court officials. They were also sent to all the schools, where the children were trained to despise their Queen.

Marie Antoinette herself, who had been so thoughtless and careless, was at last aware that there was no greeting or shouts of joy as she passed along the streets, and on the occasion of the christening of the Duc de Normandie she said, as she sighed deeply:—

"They shout hurrah for my son, but there is no applause for me."

The necklace incident in the following year had taught her that slander is like a wasp's nest—one must not touch it without a certainty of being able to destroy it.

After the trial connected with that unfortunate ornament all brightness seemed to leave her. One blow after another assailed her, as though Providence would thus prepare her for the still more terrible calamity that awaited her in after life. Her eldest son and her youngest daughter both died. Friends forsook her, and enemies grew bolder. Her happy past seemed a mockery to her, as the hatred of the people increased in strength and influence.

She had her portrait painted in the shepherdess dress she used to wear at Trianon, and the report immediately spread that she was only in her underclothing. Scandalous verses were sung about her from various platforms, and courtiers, with their wives, drove out to hear them and applaud the singers. A number of gold pieces were brought into circulation, on which the King was represented with a horn on his forehead. But the coins that were issued in Strasbourg roused the Queen to still more violent anger, because she believed that the Comte de Provence had assisted in designing them.

When Choiseul had selected her as the wife of the Dauphin,

he had meant to create a bond of union between the house of Habsburg and that of Bourbon.

His expectations were bitterly disappointed. Distrust was awakened, and Marie Antoinette was looked upon in her new home as a spy, acting solely for the benefit of her own family.

The faults of the Government were attributed to her influence, and she was made responsible for the promotion of one minister and the mistakes of another, as well as for the emptiness of the State coffers and the burden of the taxes. All bitterness and discontent that wanted an outlet were heaped up against the Queen.

Those who were most indebted to her were the first to leave her—a bitter experience in the school of adversity!

As her position became more and more untenable her opponents resorted all the more frequently to the house of the Polignacs, so that the Queen could not even visit her friend without first enquiring whom she was likely to meet.

Far from having compassion on her, the Countess was even rude to her, and one day impudently observed:—

"It surely cannot be necessary that I should close my doors to my other friends because Your Majesty wishes to visit me."

Marie Antoinette still found excuses for the friend whom she had so dearly loved, though she left off visiting her. In a conversation with the Austrian Ambassador she let fall the expression that "Madame de Polignac was very much altered," and "that she did not know her again."

Although the favourite and her circle had brought it upon themselves, they were greatly displeased at the Queen's withdrawal. They could certainly do without her society, but they did not like that the marks of favour, the appointments, and many other advantages they coveted should be unattainable through her absence, and they now began to seriously join the ranks of her worst enemies.

One of Madame de Polignac's friends, who more than any other owed gratitude to Her Majesty, composed the most shameful lines that have ever been published about her. They were founded on an impudent lie, and received with joy by her enemies in Paris and Versailles.

When she went to the theatre she was hissed. Painters did not dare to exhibit her portrait, but caricatures of herself and the King were sold in the open streets. One represented the Queen dining and the King emptying his glass, while the mob was standing outside shrieking with hunger.

At length there dawned a day when the head of the police told her that she must no longer show herself in the capital.

The light-hearted Queen had indeed become lonely.

She was almost without a protector, almost without a friend. She was pursued with hatred on all sides, and surrounded with treachery and desertion. Even the few whose devotion was beyond all doubt were suspected, and the Queen was less able than ever to distinguish between falsehood and truth. It therefore happened that she often mistook genuine coin for what was counterfeit.

Her mind was full of presentiment of future ill, and she was seized with attacks of cramp, in which she foresaw her terrible fate. She shut herself up in her own Trianon, where all was arranged as before; but still it was different—it was joyless. Laughter was banished from the rooms which had held so many joyous spirits, and which were now but the tomb of her summer recollections.

But she was soon to be taken away from the spot she loved above all others. The foliage had faded, the summer was over, and she wandered over withered leaves.

The summer of her life was over also, and her happy days had come to an end.

Part II.

Marie Antoinette and the Revolution.

"*La gloire que le monde donne et reçoit passe en un moment, et elle est toujours suivie de tristesse.*"—L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ.

"*Le caractère de la grandeur d'âme et du courage est de ne rien craindre, de se placer au-dessus des événements, et de n'en point connaître d'insouffrables dans la destinée humaine.*"—"Devoirs" de Cicéron.

CHAPTER XIX.

Meeting of the States-General.

The eighteenth century is nearing its close. The Trianon Theatre is empty, and the balls in Versailles are over. The days of monarchy are numbered, and the Queen is hated by her people.

Tramps swarm in the neighbourhood both of Paris and Versailles, and the entry of provisions is rendered difficult on account of political disturbances. In spite of all their efforts, the tradesmen cannot bring the necessary food within the city walls. Incendiarism, famine, robbery, and assassination combine with the great upheaving of the people, which neither the King nor his counsellors seem able to understand.

A fearful hailstorm has destroyed the corn crop, and the winter, close at hand, threatens to be pitiless and inclement. Charity is busy in the land, but poverty is far greater than the efforts to alleviate it.

In the midst of this seething uneasiness one thought occupies alike the minds of court and people. After an interval of 175 years the States-General of France have again been assembled, and the Government is far from easy as to what this may bring. But the people are clear in *their* views and dream of better days, when taxes will be less oppressive and poverty less pinching.

Money and bread will again be abundant in the land; the court and the proud nobility will be forced to give way.

Amid the applause of Paris and the provinces the curtain rises for the great national assembly, which is to bring about the numerous reforms the country has longed and waited for. Ideas of independence have advanced with giant strides, but the whole people still hope that a constitutional government may yet be built on a solid basis.

Unusual excitement reigns in Versailles, May 4th, 1789, when preparations are being made for the grand procession which is to introduce a new order of things into the government of the kingdom.

Carpets are laid down in the streets. Crowds have arrived from Paris, and in spite of incessant rain, all the public squares and roads are filled with spectators. Whole families have passed the night in the open air, sleeping on steps and even standing, in order not to lose the spot they have fought for on the route the procession is to follow.

The clouds disperse and the downpour ceases as the day dawns, while occasional sunbeams promise finer weather.

The streets get more and more thronged with excited, eager men hurrying to the place of meeting, and wearing a feverish look as they press forward to see and share in the business of the day.

Window places are paid for in gold, especially in houses near the Cathedral, from which the deputies of the three estates are to start, and where they are already stationed, each with a wax taper in his hand.

It is ten o'clock. A murmur runs through the expectant crowd. The court is approaching.

In front ride masters of the horse, pages, and Royal Hussars. The King is in a state coach, with the Comte de Provence on

his left and the Comte d'Artois opposite to him. In the next carriage are the Queen and the Princesses. Several court equipages follow, all with horses wearing large plumes that wave and nod in the wind.

Shouts of "Long live the King" greet the first carriage, but as the Queen drives by all is silent as the grave.

The Royal Family alight at the Cathedral, where they wait while the procession is arranged.

At length it begins to move, headed by the clergy of Versailles, while the French and Swiss Guards form a barrier to keep back the crowd.

In accordance with the etiquette of 1614, a very humble dress has been chosen for the people's representatives, who walk in two rows, wearing black clothes without ornament, and broad-brimmed hats without feathers.

But one man forms an exception to all the others, a workman from Bretagne, who appears in his usual peasant garb.

The third estate is greeted with loud shouts of applause as the power that inspires confidence for the future, and well-known deputies are looked at with lively interest, especially Mirabeau, the great orator, with his strikingly ugly face.

The nobles follow after the third estate, but there are no shouts of applause.

Their gold-embroidered cloaks, their long waving plumes, but especially their haughty looks, simply arouse bitter feelings and evoke no respect.

One only among the nobility is greeted with any warmth, and that is the Duc d'Orléans, who has refused to sit with his family, but walks among the deputies from his own district. He is applauded as the friend of the people, but especially as the enemy of the court and Queen.

The clergy, who follow the nobles, are divided into two groups: the lower priesthood and the bishops.

The Archbishop of Paris carries the host under a canopy, preceded by Life Guards and a regiment of Swiss, the cords of the canopy being held by princes of the royal house.

The King comes next in a magnificent cloak embroidered with gold, accompanied by the highest officials of the Crown, and

holding a wax taper in his hand, like all the members of his suite.

The Queen follows a little behind, at the head of the princesses and ladies of the court.

Art and nature seem to have exhausted their resources on this occasion to make her a picture of incomparable beauty and dignity.

But no applause greets Marie Antoinette; all are cold as ice as she passes on her way.

The procession advances in the light of the spring sunshine; and on the balcony of the Castle there lies a child, supported by pillows, a sallow, sickly, emaciated boy. This is the elder son of the royal pair, the Dauphin of France, little Louis Joseph, whose eyes follow the procession with a languid, sorrowful expression.

His eyes, with their dark rings, shine for one moment at the sight of this strange, brilliant scene; the last pleasure granted to him here below, for in a month he will be dead.

His mother sees him, and raises her head to look at her poor child. She forces herself to smile for him—a withered smile—and goes on her way filled with gloomy thoughts.

The menacing silence of the throng is suddenly broken by a cry that thunders on her ear: "Long live the Duc d'Orléans!" It is a shameful exclamation, for the Duke is her bitterest enemy, who has, perhaps, more than any other contributed to awaken and disseminate the hatred to which she is exposed.

It is not so much to honour the Prince that the people shout, but to insult their Queen. A crowd of women from Paris has come to greet her with scorn, and three times she is subjected to their impudent, hateful cries.

The King appears to hear nothing. Marie Antoinette turns pale, stands still, then totters, her whole frame quivering as she feels for somebody to prevent her from falling. The princesses hasten forward to support her, while the King's friends, who are prepared for an attack, shout: "Long live the King! Long live the Queen!"

"Remember that you are the daughter of Maria Theresa," she hears a voice say quite near to her.

"I do remember it," she murmurs, nearly fainting, though striving for self-command.

It is proposed to stop the procession, but she prevents this by a movement of her hand. Her head is burning and her lips are dry, yet with majestic dignity, though wearing an expression of deep sorrow, she goes on her way.

The self-control she has exercised in public leaves her, however, as soon as she returns to the Castle, where she literally sinks to the ground. Then her real feelings break forth, and she lies for hours in alarming attacks of convulsions. Her necklace and bracelets burst before her maids can unfasten them, and they are obliged to cut open her bodice to give her air.

It is not till she is in bed that she finds relief in floods of tears. She turns to her ladies to seek comfort from them, but they are far too grieved, and dare not encourage her with words of consolation.

Early the next morning a considerable number of men are assembled before a narrow side-door which leads into the hall where the opening of the Parliament is to take place. They are talking in groups; some are calm, others excited, but all are serious and determined.

At length the door is opened and through this modest entrance they slowly pass, these men in humble garb, whom the people greeted yesterday—the six hundred they themselves have elected. Gilding, candelabra, royal magnificence attract their attention as they enter the splendid hall.

The throne stands under a richly-gilt canopy, by the side of which is an easy-chair for the Queen, while stools are placed for the princesses and low chairs for the princes.

Seats are arranged for the clergy on the right, for the nobles on the left, while magistrates, generals, and secretaries of state occupy places in the centre.

Then, furthest from the throne, at the very end of the hall, are benches for the third estate, who are thus made to feel their inferior position at once.

Two masters of the ceremony show them the places assigned to them.

The people see before them the successors of the old ecclesi-

astical dignitaries, followers of those who, by their virtue or their wisdom, have built up the Church of France; and the nobles, inheritors of those titles and privileges which have been given by former kings to reward their faithful generals and statesmen.

The places of honour prepared for the clergy and nobles, and the magnificent robes of all these, do not, however, make the masses forget the six hundred sombrely-clad members who attract their sympathy, for their hopes are all centred on the men who have entered by the narrow door set apart for them.

Louis XVI. opens the States with a speech full of goodwill and attachment to his people. He says that he has longed for this day, and that he has not delayed to renew a custom which he hopes will become a source of greater strength and happiness both for the people and the kingdom at large.

This is the last time, under the old constitution, that Marie Antoinette appears as Queen on a public occasion. She seems to have a presentiment of it, and with difficulty conceals her emotion under the ceremonious smiles and bows with which she greets all present. While the King is speaking and promising devotedness and justice towards his people, while Necker is reading his statement of accounts, her eyes wander over the vast hall trying to decipher on the countenances of those present what are their real feelings towards the King and his family.

CHAPTER XX.

Slander against the Queen—The Duc d'Orléans.

The Queen was the one dark, threatening spot amid the universal hopes called forth by the meeting of the States-General.

Slander had done its work. The shouts of joy which still greeted Louis each time he showed himself were instantly silenced on the approach of Marie Antoinette.

Nobles from the provinces, village priests, and country burghers, who had arrived from every quarter, were all filled with cruel prejudice against her, for they had got accustomed to believe that she had not only brought about the scarcity of money in the land by her extravagance, but also that she was the chief hindrance to all progress and success.

The abusive songs and pamphlets which had been maliciously circulated, the mysterious reports which were whispered from one to another without the possibility of tracing their origin, had continually increased a spiteful hatred towards "the Austrian."

One thing with which her enemies never ceased to reproach her was what they called her devotion to her own country, and they incessantly accused her of sacrificing the interests of her husband to the advantage of her brother. At the close of the American war France had pledged herself to advance two million livres for the United States, and the term of payment coincided with the early days of the Revolution. Reports not only increased the sum a hundredfold, but misrepresented facts. It was alleged that Marie Antoinette was secretly assisting the Emperor Joseph of Austria, who was in pecuniary difficulties, and that the considerable sums sent to Vienna were the cause of starvation and an empty exchequer in France.

Shortly before the meeting of the States-General the spectators in the Italian Opera had noticed an enormous bill affixed to the Queen's box, bearing the words, "Tremble, tyrants; your reign is over!" And when Brienne was dismissed the mob lighted a bonfire, and shrieked, "To-morrow it will be the turn of the Queen's confidant, l'Abbé Vermond!"

Necker had been appointed successor to Brienne in accordance with the wishes of the people, and Marie Antoinette had approved of the Minister's wishes to double the numbers of the third estate, and to withdraw many gifts and privileges from favourites and dependants.

Louis' incapacity as a ruler became more and more apparent; but adversity was developing the character of his wife, who was no longer the thoughtless child she had hitherto been. All the noble qualities that had lain dormant beneath her flightiness and love of pleasure now shone forth, and the elegant woman of the world gave place to a Queen full of strength and power. But her calm dignity and her contempt for danger came too late to avert her fall.

It was useless now for her to separate herself from her friends, or to urge the King to reform abuses. Her voice never reached the people, who had no faith in the noble motives of Marie Antoinette.

For fourteen years the public had looked upon her as an enemy to the constitution, and, as the spirit of rebellion spread, their hatred towards her became more and more deeply rooted.

Revolutionary France unanimously turned upon "the Austrian," who was the chosen victim from the very first.

During the days preceding the opening of the States-General the roads between Versailles and the Trianon had been thronged with pedestrians, lawyers, priests, citizens, and deputies, who even in remote corners of the kingdom had heard of the Queen's little Trianon. All wished to gain admittance to see things with their own eyes. They even questioned the servants about the King's reputed addiction to drink, and nothing could shake them in their conviction that the Queen was leading a disreputable life.

The reports which hovered round the name of Marie Antoinette were made up of the most incongruous materials—chidings of the

old princesses, slanders of Madame de la Motte, jealous speeches of the Comte de Provence. Joseph II., Charles d'Artois, princes and lacqueys, had all unintentionally contributed to lower her in the eyes of the people. Even she herself had in no small degree helped to bring about her fall by her thoughtlessness, her feathers and diamonds, her love of gambling, her extravagance, and her Comtesse de Polignac.

But more than all this, there was a prince of the royal house who had gained popularity and consideration for himself by joining the ranks of the Queen's enemies.

The licentious Duc d'Orléans, a grandson of the guardian of Louis XV., had opposed himself to the court during the increasing disturbances in the land in order to further his own selfish ends.

The "Palais Royal" of the Orleans family was the rendezvous for the conspirators, because, according to the old privileges of this family, no messenger of the law could enter the house.

The slanderous stories which formed the foundation for the Queen's scaffold chiefly emanated from the Palais Royal, where they found a ready welcome before they were echoed forth to the world. It was within these walls that the storming of the Bastille was arranged, and also the details for June 20th and August 10th.

The Duc d'Orléans, formerly Duc de Chartres, had, when quite a young man, married the Duc de Penthièvre's daughter, who admired the handsome man, though perfectly aware of his dissolute life. The Prince, who was far more attracted by the lady's fortune than by her virtues, married her without a spark of affection.

He was addicted to sensual pleasures before his marriage, and his irregular connections were not dissolved when he became a husband. He opened his house wide for men and women of vicious habits, and arranged the wildest orgies for them. He ruined, both morally and physically, his brother-in-law, the Prince de Lamballe, who, if he had lived, would have been sole heir to his father's renowned name and immense estates.

When Marie Antoinette arrived in France, this son-in-law of the Duc de Penthièvre openly paid court to the young Dauphiness, who received his attentions with her usual easy frankness.

Although the Empress Maria Theresa had pointed him out as an untrustworthy acquaintance, her daughter had never scrupled to accord him a share of the kind feelings which she entertained towards all around her.

Members of the house of Bourbon had for generations looked askance upon the Orleans family. In the event of the extinction of the direct line from Louis XIV. the princes of Orleans were entitled to the throne, and this right of inheritance had already aroused the dislike of Louis XV. towards them. When the old Duke had announced to him that his son wished to marry the Duc de Penthièvre's daughter, and begged for the King's permission, Louis replied:—

"It does not please me that a prince belonging to our family's younger branch should become richer than my grandchildren; uncomfortable complications might result from it. But as the throne is secured in the direct line through my three grandsons, I will offer no opposition to the desired alliance."

Louis XV.'s son had brought up his children to believe without scruple that the Orleans family would shrink from no means, not even from crime, to pave a way to the throne. This view, which had become firmly rooted in the mind of Louis XVI., influenced him during the great Revolution. And even before it broke out he had felt a dislike to the young Duke, while he observed with anxiety that the Duc d'Artois seemed to be warmly attached to him. Although Marie Antoinette had in the first instance received the Duke as a friend, she had come to look upon him as a disturber of the public peace. His lack of good manners and his disreputable life displeased her, while his deliberate disappearance each time the Royal Family was in danger aroused the suspicion both of the King and the Queen.

Marie Antoinette rarely resisted the temptation to utter a jesting word or to obey a humorous suggestion, and she continually ridiculed the Duc d'Orléans, who at first accepted her mockery with tolerable good nature.

He had built three large houses, which he let, and thereby greatly increased his already considerable income.

"We hardly see you here on Sunday," said the Queen, referring to this; "I suppose it is because you are keeping shop."

The sarcasm irritated the Prince.

As time went on, and she opposed his plan of becoming High Admiral of France, and finally, after the birth of Marie Thérèse, scornfully rejected his proposal of a union between her daughter and his son, Louis Philippe, he was roused to show himself her declared enemy.

Conscious of the increasing coolness of the King and Queen towards him, the Duke came less and less frequently to Versailles, and finally broke with this elder branch of his family. As we have already said, he sought the favour of the people in order to enrol himself among the Queen's enemies, and as Prince of the blood he became a dangerous tool in the hands of the conspirators.

Still it is a mistake to see his influence and to hear his voice in every disturbance. The Duke was more to be pitied than blamed, for his error arose from weakness, not from malice; and it was, moreover, terribly difficult for him to leave the path of the Revolution after he had once entered upon it.

In the meantime his hatred towards Marie Antoinette was sadly fraught with danger. He accused her of having brought him into the false position he was holding, and of having continually incensed the King against him. He reproached her bitterly for having humiliated him by her scorn, and for causing him to join the enemy's camp by her animosity.

His mistresses, especially his children's governess, the spirituelle Madame de Genlis, did nothing to lessen his hatred. The conceited authoress had repeatedly felt herself affronted by the Queen, who had not sufficiently recognized her merits, and the bitterness towards Marie Antoinette, which is certainly perceptible in the personal recollections of Madame de Genlis, must surely have been aggravated by her daily intercourse with the Duke.

When Marie Antoinette for the second time became a mother, the Prince of Orleans swore with insulting bitterness that this child should never become King of France.

He was banished on account of his disloyal expressions towards the Royal Family; but although it was he that had led her husband into the very depths of licentiousness, the Princesse de

Lamballe interceded with the King for him, and as both Louis and Marie Antoinette were attached to the Princess as well as to the Duke's unfortunate wife, who was totally unlike her husband, the sentence of banishment was withdrawn.

The Duke remembered at intervals that he belonged to the house of Bourbon, and that he was a royal prince. When he thought of the fact he repented of his errors, and seriously resolved to show himself a reliable relative and a loyal subject. Then his revolutionary friends again excited his hatred towards the Queen, and a strange fate led to most of the plots against the royal house being developed in his palace. To him belong the shame of being connected with them, and the misfortune that the conspirators used his name as a shield.

CHAPTER XXI.

Political Disputes—Louis and Marie Antoinette lose their Eldest Son—Fall of the Bastille—the King visits Paris.

VIOLENT disputes arose immediately after the meeting of the States-General. The third estate on the one hand, the nobles and some of the ecclesiastics on the other, were soon opposed to each other in open quarrel, and the contention became all the more fierce as the increasing demands of the one party were met by the determined resistance of the other.

The attitude of the people became more and more menacing, the position of the Government more and more untenable, and, in addition to this, famine was raging in the land.

L'Abbé Sièyes, the member for Paris, had given a strong impetus to the movement by his book, *What is the Third Estate?* To this question he had answered, "Nothing." "What ought it to be?" he had replied, "Everything."

In accordance with his proposition, and after many stormy discussions between the two parties, the third estate assumed the name of National Assembly; and Bailly, a celebrated astronomer who had quitted his peaceful study to mingle in the conflict, was chosen president. Thus, using their own absolute power and without awaiting the King's permission, the third estate appropriated to itself sole authority over the whole nation.

Events followed each other in rapid succession, and the leader chosen to direct their proceedings had neither the necessary qualities as a statesman nor the power to gain the confidence and esteem of the army.

And, with his natural infirmity of purpose, Louis too possessed neither the one nor the other.

The Queen, whose counsel he sought in his dire perplexity, was

one day in favour of reform, but strongly conservative the next. The court restrained her on the one hand, while the distrust and bitterness of the people's deputies influenced her on the other, and she was made responsible for all that occurred. But her sorrows as a mother hushed the ever-increasing political anxieties to silence for a few days.

In her youth Marie Antoinette had had all the faults of a woman of the world; she had been frivolous, fond of dress, selfish, extravagant, and criticising. But, side by side with her many and serious failings, she possessed at least one good quality, she was a good mother, and devotion to her children had aroused in her both thought and reflection.

Now, in the evil days of her adversity, she looked for strength and courage in the care of her children; but the heir to the throne, whose birth had given rise to such genuine expressions of joy among the people, was dying, and his bitterness and distrust of his mother painfully increased the difficulty of nursing him.

His condition had caused anxiety for a whole year, but the physicians had tried to make the mother believe that the terrible malady which was sapping his strength would yield to treatment in time. He was sent to Meudon, but the change brought no alleviation, and Marie Antoinette's eyes were at last opened.

In the spring of 1789 the fact could no longer be ignored; the Dauphin's complaint was incurable, and he himself knew that he was dying. While the throne itself was tottering, the mother's hope was being crushed.

The Princesse de Lamballe and the Comtesse de Lâge went to visit the sick child at Meudon, and returned deeply saddened and depressed. "It is heartrending to see his sufferings, his patience, and the clearness of his mind," wrote the Comtesse de Lâge. "He was listening to reading when we arrived, and had expressed the strange wish to be laid on a billiard-table. As the Princess and I exchanged glances, the same thought struck us both: his position resembled that of a corpse.

"The Princesse de Lamballe asked him what he was reading.

"'I am reading a very interesting portion of our history, the reign of Charles VII.,' he answered; 'it tells of so many heroes.'

"I ventured to enquire if His Royal Highness was reading in

chronological order, or if he was only choosing striking episodes here and there.

"'I am reading it straight through,' he replied. 'I have not sufficient knowledge to be able to choose, and I am interested in the whole.'

"His beautiful fading eyes looked fixedly into mine as he was speaking."

The end was approaching, and Paris, which had been agitated for weeks with political excitement, relented for a moment, thinking of the child that had been welcomed seven years ago, softened by the difference between then and now.

The evening before his child's death, the King went to Meudon to see him. His tutor sent out his secretary, Lefèvre, to request His Majesty not to enter the room.

An eye-witness relates:—

"The King hesitated a moment, and then exclaimed with sobs:

"'Alas, my son is dead!'

"'No, sire,' replied Lefèvre, 'he is not dead, but he is as ill as it is possible to be.'

"The King sank into a chair near the door. Almost in the same minute the Queen rushed in and threw herself down at her husband's knees as he said to her, with tears:—

"'Alas! our dear son is dead, for I am not allowed to see him.'

"The secretary repeated that he was not dead.

"The Queen continued clasping the King's knee as she said, with tears streaming from her eyes:—

"'Let us take courage; nothing is impossible with God. Let us hope that He will save our dear child.'"

The following day, June 4th, the heir to the French throne died. It was exactly a month since that procession from the Cathedral which preceded the meeting of the States-General.

A few days later the royal vault at St. Denis was opened to receive the King's son, and the people carelessly turned their thoughts for a brief moment to the coffin of their little prince.

But in the Castle of Meudon the poor mother lay on her knees with her head buried in her hands, and would not be persuaded to leave the empty bed, while her sad thoughts incessantly dwelt on the child who had suffered so terribly, and on the hopes

extinguished by his death. Her agony is well expressed in the few words she sent to the Princesse de Lamballe:—

"How happy you are not to be a mother."

* * * * * *

But sorrow for the death of their son could not free the parents from anxiety connected with the political situation. It was a wild, seething, tempestuous time, and the air was filled with rumours that threatened some awful calamity.

The day after the Dauphin's death Bailly arrived at the Castle to express the sympathy of the National Assembly, but in the same breath he had the audacity to request that a certain number of delegates might be received by the King in order to discuss with him "the rotten condition which"—as he expressed it—"would allow of no middleman between the King and his people."

"Are there no fathers among the deputies of the third estate?" asked Louis with unwonted bitterness.

Bailly, however, repeated his request in such a commanding tone and such forcible words that the King had to yield and receive the delegates at once.

It would be too tedious for us to follow exactly the events which ensued and which history relates in detail. The causes of displeasure were numerous:—

In a solemn assembly the King had revoked the resolutions which the third estate had passed and confirmed with an oath.

Necker, the man on whom all moderate patriots had fixed their hopes, had sent in his resignation, although, at the instance of the King and Queen, he had again resumed office as Finance Minister; but it was an open secret that his adversaries were unceasingly plotting his overthrow, and several regiments were summoned to the neighbourhood of Versailles in order to support the Government if necessary.

Necker was dismissed when the conduct of the new Ministry was entrusted to the Queen's favourite, Baron Breteuil, a violent opponent to the popular party.

"I cannot go to bed till I have told you that Necker is gone," wrote Marie Antoinette that same evening to her friend, the Duchesse de Polignac. "God grant that we may at last do the

right thing, which is our one and only wish. The moment is a fearful one, but I am brave."

The dismissal of the Minister excited the wrath of many, who saw a slight to the whole French nation in the disgrace of their favourite, and it was feared that the troops would seize Paris.

The busts of Necker and the Duc d'Orléans were hung with crape and carried round among silent crowds, who respectfully bent their heads. The people talked of treachery and national bankruptcy, and declared it was the intention of the King to commit Necker to the Bastille and behead the Duc d'Orléans. In other words, that the horrors of St. Bartholomew awaited the people's representatives, that the capital was to be given up to hired troops, and that the Queen, incited by the Polignac family, would personally urge the soldiers to cruelty and lawlessness.

The exasperated populace responded to these dangerous lying reports by formidable preparations. They tore up the pavement in the streets, arrested the King's messengers, and stole the secrets of his correspondence; they plundered peaceable travellers, burnt and pillaged, shouted, and threatened to attack Versailles.

The National Assembly was not less excited and impatient than the dwellers in the capital. Mirabeau thundered against the court with his powerful eloquence. Sinister prophecies and imprecations were uttered against the Queen, who was looked upon as the author of Necker's fall. L'Abbé Gregorius compared "the Austrian" with Jezebel, while Mirabeau screamed:—

"It is weakness, not a virtue, in a Frenchman to trust in kings."

The royal troops were stationed outside Paris, under the command of Baron Besenval; but the soldiers who had been pressed into the service wavered so constantly between their sympathy with the people and the oath of allegiance which they had sworn to the King, that instead of keeping the populace within bounds, they more frequently increased their excitement.

To the east of Paris lay the Bastille, an old building which had acquired a sorrowful notoriety under former kings. The uses to which it had been put through the despotism of rulers and their Ministers had rendered it even more famous than its strength as a fortress; for, during the Ligue and the Fronde, it had been

conquered and reconquered five or six times. It was a hated, execrated pile, with none but painful memories, constantly rehearsed by the people. Innumerable victims to the caprice of rulers or their favourites had sighed within its walls, and men were filled with horror of the spot where these numerous martyrs to their opinions had been imprisoned.

It seemed quite natural that their anger should be directed against this standing threat to the city—this old symbol of the absolute power of kings.

There was hardly a kinder-hearted man to be found in all France than Louis XVI. He had done away with the low, dark dungeons in the Châtelet prison; and he had ordered "la Force" to be used only for debtors, in order that they might not mix with thieves and other criminals.

But the Bastille was, as it were, a sign of his royal prerogative; he was attached to the old fortress, and was reluctant to have its importance destroyed.

While the severity of other prisons was mitigated, this one retained all its former discipline.

In the year 1789 the Bastille was, however, but the shadow of a fortress, guarded by 82 "Invalides" and 36 of the Swiss Guards. But its cannon commanded a great part of Paris, and the reports in circulation aroused fears that they would be used against the capital itself.

On the morning of July 14th the people rushed into the Hotel des Invalides and seized what arms they could lay their hands upon. They then hurried to the fortress, shouting with all their might, "We *will* have the Bastille."

The garrison commanded the insurgents to withdraw, but none obeyed, and the crowd continued to grow as men pressed forward from every quarter, and priests and women joined the throng.

Then the struggle began, and lasted from noon till five o'clock. One of Besenval's cavalry regiments had advanced, but was obliged to withdraw and leave the capital in the hands of the populace.

At length de Launay, the Governor, could hold out no longer.

The mob took the fortress, murdered de Launay, and stuck his head on a pike. Then, surprised at the victory, they revelled in

the smoking ruins, and gloried in the good deed that had rendered their bugbear powerless, utterly destroyed, levelled to the ground.

A white-bearded veteran, whom they had found in one of the dungeons, was carried in triumph through the streets of the city. Bonfires were lighted and crowds danced round the ruins, congratulating each other on their share in storming the fortress, while poetry, the arts and sciences, all and everything vied in celebrating the event.

The long smouldering French Revolution may be said to have begun on the day the Bastille fell; but, even while celebrating their victory, the populace prepared for defence, collected arms, and barricaded the streets against the royal troops. Then, black with gunpowder and soiled with blood, they declared themselves the protectors of the city, while drunken furies added to the excitement.

During the unwonted confusion the National Assembly met at Versailles, and undertook to manage the affairs of the capital. A citizen guard—afterwards the renowned National Guard—was formed, and regiments were gradually drafted to all parts of the kingdom.

The Minister, de Liancourt, hastened to the King the moment he heard of the events in the capital.

"It is a riot," exclaimed Louis, when Liancourt had finished his report.

"Sire," answered the courtier, "it is more: it is a revolution."

The King had hitherto contemplated these serious warnings with indifference, and had failed to realize either threats or rebellion. But his confidence was shaken by this attack, and the fall of the Bastille was like a blow that affected his own heart.

"This is too much," he repeated again and again. And this loss of the city fortress affected not only the King but every Government official, whose terror simply strengthened the progress of the Revolution.

They had not believed in the power of the people, but had ridiculed their efforts, and the court party were panic-struck when they saw their confidence in the army was vain.

The Parisians were amazed at their own power, and the court was appalled at its own helplessness.

Indecision and fear within the Ministry paralysed individual effort and resolution, till the King's counsellors slowly began to understand that the Revolution had grown under their very eyes, and was now threatening even the throne itself.

During these days the National Assembly had vainly sent messengers again and again to the King, to persuade him to withdraw his troops from the environs of the capital.

But now Louis hastened to comply with their wishes of his own accord, and the morning after the fall of the Bastille he and his brothers went on foot, without escort, to the National Assembly.

At that very moment Mirabeau was shouting with his stentorian voice that "the counsellors in the Castle, however high their rank, were each and all responsible for their country's misfortunes."

"Tell the King," screamed the orator to the delegates, whom he was just sending for the last time, "and make him understand that these foreign troops were yesterday visited by princes, princesses, and court ladies, who flattered and encouraged them with words and gifts. Tell him that these foreign mercenaries, gorged with gold and wine, have been shouting all night about the subjection of France, brawling out their impudent songs, and drinking to the overthrow of the National Assembly. Tell him that the inmates of his own palace have danced to the sound of this barbarous music, and that it was thus the night of St. Bartholomew's began."

Just as he was finishing his speech, it was announced that Louis was on his way to the meeting.

He was received with coldness, but his good-natured, confiding expression once again aroused their sympathy.

"I am one with the people," he began; "I rely upon you."

As he finished speaking the deputies applauded, and without regard to precedent or rank they crowded round him and insisted on accompanying him to the Castle.

He returned with more confidence than he had left, and a perfect mob that cheered him on his way.

The Queen was awaiting him on the balcony with her little son, Charles Louis, who after his brother's death had become Dauphin, in her arms, and by her side stood her daughter, Marie Thérèse.

All looks were turned towards the weeping Queen. Her appearance was so touching that for a moment not a heart was closed against her, the gloomy faces of the crowd brightened, and their silence was broken by joyous shouts.

By this visit to the National Assembly—this conciliatory step—the King had sacrificed much of his authority. His decision to ignore himself does not seem to have pained him, and, after wavering between good nature and dignity, he abandoned the latter in the hope of peace.

The National Assembly had required him to recall Necker, to dismiss the troops, and to approve of all that had been done in Paris, to which he agreed. He forgave revolt and murder, and retired from a struggle begun without forethought and carried on without consistency.

The Ministry was dismissed and Necker was sent for. The King announced that he was on good terms with the National Assembly, and that it was his intention to visit the capital shortly.

Bailly was made Mayor of Paris, and General Lafayette took the command of the National Guard, which was to play such a prominent part in the history of the Revolution. He belonged to a highly respected noble family, but held Liberal opinions, and had fought with honour in the American War of Independence.

News was received from Versailles that a reconciliation had taken place between the King and the National Assembly; but the streets of Paris still resounded with the cries of "Vengeance on the aristocracy! Vengeance on the court party!"

When Louis arrived, July 17th, he was filled with anxious forebodings. He had attended Mass and confessed before starting, and had secretly given authority to the Duc de Provence to assume sovereign control in the event of his own life or liberty being attacked in Paris.

Marie Antoinette was averse to the King's condescension, and put no faith in peace purchased at the expense of regal dignity. Weeping and kneeling, she had entreated her husband to renounce his journey to the rebellious capital.

The day of his absence seemed interminably long to her, and she wandered in feverish nervousness from one room to another,

finally shutting herself up in her private apartments, and wringing her hands as she paced to and fro. Then, trembling with fear, she wrote the draft of a speech she herself would deliver in the National Assembly if the rioters, whom she considered capable of anything, should oppose the return of the King, while with excited impatience, she exclaimed again and again:—

"They will not let him come back!"

But the day passed better than she had dared to hope.

Louis received the keys of the city from the hands of the Mayor, Bailly, who said:—

"Sire, I hand over to Your Majesty the keys of our good city, Paris. They are the same that were once presented to King Henri IV. He had regained his people; now it is the people who have regained their King."

The women handed him weapons adorned with flowers, saying:—

"The presence of Your Majesty disarms us."

Hats, caps, and even the statue of Louis XV. were decorated with red and blue cockades—the present colours of Paris—which had replaced the white lilies of the Bourbons, while the bands played, "Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille?"

About six o'clock a page arrived in Versailles to announce the success of Louis' visit to the capital. He himself returned at nine o'clock, exhausted with fatigue, but thankful that no disaster had marred the day on which he had entered with so much anxiety. Marie Antoinette hastened downstairs to meet him, and the King embraced her, his children, and his sister, while they all wept for joy.

Paris had received their sovereign in a friendly spirit; but his condescension had simply tended to excite the confidence and vanity of the people, who were by no means peaceably inclined. The Queen was far more clear-sighted than the rest, and had foreseen that they would be more likely to be elated by the weak indulgence of their King, than touched by his gentleness and favour towards them.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Comte d'Artois and the Polignac Family leave France—Emigration begins.

THIS would have been a splendid opportunity for the princes of the royal house to show their courage and resolution if only they had understood how and where to do so, but the support upon which the King had counted within his own family was absent in his hour of need.

Before the storm broke the Comte d'Artois had ostentatiously represented himself to be the defender of royal authority, without in the least understanding the events that were agitating France, threatening new things, and crushing the old on their path. He had been the loudest of all in condemning his brother's weakness.

His lascivious life and his contemptuous behaviour towards the people had long since roused their exasperation, and he was universally hated before the Revolution broke out.

Again and again the mob had pursued and hooted him in Paris, and even in Versailles he had been insulted more than once.

More anxious for his own safety than uneasy about his brother, whose conduct he had formerly criticised so severely, he fled from the country with his wife and children as soon as he began to suspect that danger threatened him in France.

He meant to say farewell for a month to the land which he was not to see again till five-and-twenty years had rolled away.

The Duc d'Enghien, the Duc de Bourbon, the Prince de Condé, the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Vauguyon, l'Abbé Vermond, Baron Breteuil, and many other dismissed Ministers left at the same time as the Comte d'Artois and his family. These noblemen —especially the King's brother—encouraged emigration, which

was not only a mistake, but even became a danger, because it removed the natural protectors of the throne, opened the way for the victory of their opponents, and placed the most powerful weapons within their grasp.

Distrust of Marie Antoinette continued to prevail, and she was thought to share the political opinions of the Comte d'Artois, while public opinion made her answerable for the dangerous plans of the court party. Reports, too, were current that she and her brother-in-law were in secret negotiation with foreign powers.

They were without foundation, for her confidence in the Comte d'Artois had long since given place to distrust, and her political position at this time is clearly seen in the following words of her brother, the Emperor Joseph:—

"She has adopted the only course suitable for her. She lives in complete retirement, and occupies herself exclusively with her children."

But she had been hated for so many years that prejudice could no longer be silenced.

Great changes were undoubtedly at hand, and a mighty stream of events was ready to crush many hearts and alter the fortunes of thousands.

The Queen's person was not yet actually in danger, but the lives of her friends were certainly insecure.

The cry that the Polignac family should be sacrificed, assassinated, or killed in the public streets was heard and repeated without fear, even at the foot of the throne itself.

Madame de Campan relates that she one day heard a man in disguise say to a veiled lady:—

"The Duchess is at last in Versailles. She is like a mole working in the dark, but we shall soon get hold of her."

Marie Antoinette had long known what the people thought of Madame de Polignac, and felt that in the present state of affairs threats might soon become a stern reality. She forgot her own danger while thinking of that of her friends, and used every persuasion to induce the Polignac family to seek safety from the fury of the populace.

She sent for the Duchess on the evening of July 16th, after the

fall of the Bastille, spoke to her alone, explained her great anxiety, and begged her to leave that very night.

"They will take *you*, but it is *me* they really want," she said. "I fear the worst. Go! Do not wait to leave until they have claimed me for their victim."

Nothing less than a revolution was needed to rekindle the friendship of the Polignacs. Marie Antoinette was on the verge of ruin, and perhaps her friend thought she herself had had no small share in bringing about the dangers and misfortunes that threatened the Queen. At any rate, it is certain that she realized that the time had come for her to show her devotion more than ever.

She would not listen to any entreaty, nor consent to forsake her benefactress when trouble was at hand, and in this resolution she was encouraged by her husband.

Marie Antoinette alternately besought, wept, and commanded; but neither would yield and become cowards, in spite of their years of ingratitude.

The Queen was at last in despair as to what means she could use to ensure the departure of her friends. She trembled for every minute of delay, and finally appealed to the King for help.

It was not till Louis pleaded, together with his wife, that he spoke of the flight of the Comte d'Artois, and finally *ordered* them to go, that the Polignacs consented to leave France.

It is impossible to love another for years, and believe too that the affection is mutual, without an aching heart when the moment for separation arrives. For fourteen long years Marie Antoinette had seen her friend almost daily, had exchanged thoughts and opinions with her, and shared both her joys and sorrows. Now, when it was imperative to send her away, she realized but too keenly how close this intercourse had been.

Her resentment during the last few years towards Madame de Polignac was certainly justifiable; but still she could not part with composure from the friend who had been with her in her happiest days, and whom she had loved far above all others.

In this last moment thoughts of the past were aroused in the hearts of both, and their former warm feelings for each other

awoke anew; but in the loving struggle it was again the royal friend that gave the most. The Queen, who had shown herself strong on so many occasions, was weaker than she had foreseen when the hour of parting arrived.

"Farewell, my dearest, tenderest friend," she wrote to her that same night. "How terrible is that word farewell! I am powerless even to embrace you."

An hour later Madame de Polignac was seated, disguised and trembling, by the side of a hired coachman, her husband and daughter, with a priest who was travelling with them, being inside the carriage. They had been assisted in the preparations for their flight by the Swedish Count Fersen and the Venetian envoy Pisani.

They stopped at Sens to change horses, and found the town in a perfect uproar. The travellers were asked if the Polignacs were still with the Queen.

"No," answered the priest; "Versailles is happily freed from those people by this time."

When the driver left them at the next stage he whispered to the Duchess, "There are faithful folk all the world over. I recognized you all in that drive from Sens."

Late one evening they reached Rome, and to celebrate their arrival the Pope ordered the biggest bells of the city to be rung, the people to offer up *Ave Marias* for the safety of France.

While the Queen's favourite was nearing this temporary asylum accident had brought her in contact with one of her bitterest enemies, for in Basle she had met Necker, who was triumphantly on his way to Versailles, summoned by the very people who were driving her and her family into exile.

* * * * * *

Joy and enthusiasm greeted the Minister on his way.

A few days after his return the Comte de Noailles proposed in the National Assembly that the personal servitude of the peasants should be abolished, and that a complete reform in the whole system of taxation should be effected.

His proposition was unanimously accepted. The night between the 4th and 5th of August saw the death of the old feudal

system, and in the course of a few hours the traditions of hundreds of years were utterly destroyed.

The Commons followed the example of the nobility, and abolished every exclusive right and privilege throughout the kingdom. A spirit of generosity seemed to pervade every class, and a *Te Deum* was sung in the royal chapel to celebrate this memorable night.

But even while these deliberations for the good of the people were going on, they themselves were being carried away by a spirit of unbridled fury. The peasants refused to pay their taxes, banded themselves together in wild confusion, killed their landlords, and pulled down their houses.

It soon became evident that Necker was not the man to restore order in the land. The spirit of revolt spread from Paris to the provinces, and murder, with all its horrors, was the order of the day. The National Guard was powerless and the army without discipline, without officers even, and there were no magistrates. Trade was at a standstill, convents were plundered, castles burnt, and their owners hung, maimed, or beaten. One deputy, who had given all his plate and valuables for the benefit of the poor, received the thanks of the people in the form of stones, with which they mercilessly assailed him.

Count Axel Fersen, who as an officer in the French army was at this time in Paris, wrote letters to his father, which give us some idea of the state of things. He says that between 12,000 and 13,000 soldiers deserted from their regiments in less than a month.

"There is neither law nor order, neither justice nor discipline, nor religion," he exclaimed in one of his letters; "all union is destroyed, and how can it again be restored?"

"The King has lost all authority," he wrote another day. "The National Assembly trembles for Paris, and Paris is in fear of some forty or fifty thousand tramps; people without house or home, who have settled in Montmartre and in the Palais Royal, who cannot be dislodged, and who keep the city in a continual ferment. The country people are intoxicated with the idea of the perfect equality of all men, which has been preached to them for so long in the writings of the 'philosophers.'

"And the abolition of all feudal ties and other rights, which in the course of three hours—and after a social evening—had been so rapidly resolved upon by the National Assembly, has only confirmed them in their conviction that no payment of any kind can be required of them. The nobles are in despair, the clergy seem to have lost their wits, and the third estate is filled with displeasure. . . . Many regiments have revolted; others have laid violent hands on their officers."

The King, who had looked for support in the National Assembly, and who still believed that concessions would bring peace, saw his moderate propositions rejected with disdain.

Famine was increasing. Rumours were heard of a probable war and the Queen's secret plotting, while a revolutionary spirit was spreading from the "rulers" of the land down to the very lowest of taverns. The misery of each individual home seemed to be abroad, poisoning the minds of all.

Every arrogant word that had been spoken by a noble to his humblest peasants met with its response now in the wild shouts of the people. There needed but a spark to put the whole kingdom in flames.

Unfortunately it was the King and Queen themselves who imprudently kindled the match, which the infuriated populace utilised to drive them forth from their old home.

In consequence of the continued desertion of the soldiers, Versailles was insufficiently protected, and was unable to quell even the slightest disturbances among the people.

Le Comte Saint Priest, the only man in the Ministry who possessed any resolution, summoned the regiment called "Flanders" to Versailles, one of the few whose fidelity could be relied upon.

But this precaution proved dangerous, for the arrival of the soldiers roused the displeasure of the citizens.

The royal guard invited their new comrades to an entertainment, which had been arranged in the theatre.

Every one accepted, and all that the court could still offer, men of rank and beautiful women, assembled to meet them. Wine flowed in abundance, and the evening seemed to prove to the persecuted royal pair that there were still voices to welcome

them with enthusiasm, and strong hearts and arms ready to defend them. The desire to see their majesties in their midst increased as the evening advanced, and some of the court ladies went to tell the Queen, who at first refused to appear, though longing to be present.

The King had just returned from hunting, when Marie Antoinette was being urged to accept the invitation, and although Louis much preferred rest to any ovation, he too was asked to show himself. The Queen neither pressed him to go nor deterred him from yielding; the courtiers finally induced him to comply with the wishes of his friends, and the Royal Family joined the meeting.

Their appearance seemed to electrify everyone present, and forgetful of etiquette, both officers and soldiers collected round them.

Marie Antoinette, who was holding the Dauphin by the hand, smiled through her tears. All eyes were fixed on her, while flowers and garlands were cast at her feet. The officers drew their swords, and all present joined in singing—

"O Richard, ô mon roi!
L'univers t'abandonne."

The song that we may look upon as that of the dying swan over the expiring kingdom.

Ladies put white ribbons on their dresses, while the red and blue cockades were torn from the officers' uniforms and replaced by a white one, the Bourbon device.

The King seemed more surprised than pleased with this homage, to which he had become so unaccustomed; but he had not the firmness necessary to reject the dangerous demonstration. The Queen was carried away in the general enthusiasm, and deceived herself with the belief that it augured renewed hope for her, in spite of the present troublous times.

When they left the theatre all present accompanied them, while at every step they took renewed noise and enthusiastic shouting proclaimed the devotion of the regiments. Feasting went on till long after midnight, enthusiasm gave place to

disorder, and songs and toasts became threatening in their tone. Processions, dancing, and wild shouting went on in the court, "which they name court of marble," till daylight.

The awakening of the guests was less joyous.

The feast had taken place in the night between the 3rd and 4th of October, and the following day it was discussed in Paris, when the report was spread that the court, with the King and Queen, had on this occasion thrown off their mask. They had laughed at the famine in the land as they sat at their luxurious feast; they had laid a plan that the friends of the people should be hung and the National Assembly be dissolved. It finally passed from mouth to mouth that the Queen's sole aim was to avenge the events of the 14th of July.

The people had wished for an excuse for their wrath, and now they had found one. They had waited for the court to take some step which could be construed into a crime, and they greedily seized on this feast as a pretext for fresh disturbances, which began on the morning of October 5th. Again it was women who clamoured for action, and declared that the time had come to march to Versailles, welcome Mirabeau, and whisper a word of warning to "Fat Papa Veto."

"Louis is a kind man," they said; "he will not refuse us the bread we are craving for. Why is he hiding himself in Versailles when we want to see him in Paris? Why does he sit there, surrounded by body-guards and foreign regiments, when his people offer to protect him?"

Some proposed to go and tear him away from the surroundings that were cutting him off from his subjects, while others were even more violent and not averse to blood-shedding.

A young girl seized a drum belonging to one of the guard and ran through the streets beating an alarm, as she shrieked at intervals, "Bread! Bread!"

"Les dames de la Halle" were the first to advance, and they were soon joined by the women from the Faubourg St. Antoine, who compelled all whom they met to accompany them by threatening to cut off the hair of those who resisted.

At this time there were literally crowds of women in Paris who had eaten nothing for days, and who were simply faint

with hunger and privation. The dominant feeling among these wretched beings was hatred of the higher classes, whom they envied because they could satisfy their appetites.

But it was not hunger alone that drove the mob out to Versailles. Many of the market women, for instance, were comfortably off. They approved of the Monarchy, but for that very reason they were eager that the King should live in their city. Then they felt the effects of the prevailing famine, though not personally, for sitting as they did day after day on the public squares, they had more opportunity than others of watching its sad effects.

Others were carried away by the universal movement, excited by its strength and determination. Shop-women, actresses, concierges, girls of light character, all helped in large numbers to swell the procession.

The mounted National Guard stood with drawn swords in the streets of the town, but the women were not to be deterred. They threw stones at the horsemen and at the infantry, who could not make up their minds to fire on the other sex, many of whom were well-dressed and wore white gowns in honour of the occasion. Others looked wild and starved, as they shrieked for bread and arms. Others, again, who had been forced to join the throng, were sick with terror. Finally a number of idle men marched among them, and not a few who had disguised themselves as women.

The wild disorder increased as the mob grew, and talked of taking Louis prisoner and proclaiming the Duc d'Orléans King in his stead.

They advanced on to Versailles under the leadership of Maillard, who had been present at the storming of the Bastille.

Some ten or twelve drummers marched at their head, and a few guns were discernible in their midst. Those who had been unable to procure arms of any kind, spears or lances, tied knives and heavy bunches of keys to the end of their sticks.

"Here are weapons enough to finish off the Austrian," they shrieked; "she is the cause of all our sufferings."

"She has danced for her own pleasure, but it shall be to our tune this time," screamed others.

"Antoinette! we will make ribbons of your skin; we will fill our ink-pots with your blood; we will carry your entrails in our aprons," howled yet others.

The procession, which numbered some 7000 or 8000 from the beginning, was continually increased by fresh groups that joined them as they marched.

The roads were soaked by the rain, and the day was cloudy and cold.

"See," said many of the women, who were wet through and covered with mud, "see what we look like! Antoinette shall pay for this. We will not leave the palace till our work is done."

"For my part," said a greasy butcher, "I have no mind to kill Fat Veto; but as for Antoinette, it would give me great pleasure to sever her head from her body."

The most exasperated were of opinion that the Comte de Provence, the Duc d'Orléans, and the Dauphin should suffer too.

The sound of the alarm-bell announced to Versailles the approach of the mob, and the report of the first shot was awaited with feverish anxiety.

Marie Antoinette had gone to Trianon as usual after dinner, accompanied by a single servant.

She had looked after her favourite plants, had watered them, and given her orders to the gardener for the coming winter.

Now she was resting for a moment on the soft moss of a grotto, quite alone, and looking out over the garden. A chilly autumnal wind made her shudder from head to foot as it blew her hair about her face; it was damp and clammy.

As she sat she recalled the vague dreams of her youth about her life in this new home, and thought of recent public events and the weak, vacillating King who was her husband.

She dwelt on the son whom she had lost, and the two dearly-loved friends who had left her. She sighed, for most of those she had called friends had either deceived her or fled for their own safety. Her own life was in danger, and her dignity as a woman and as a Queen was wounded day by day. She asked herself what fate could be in store for her, and especially for the son she still possessed, the child she most dearly loved.

The clouds gathered, and a few drops of rain fell on her head.

She rose, and through the opening of the grotto saw a page approaching towards her. She hastened forward, seized a letter he was holding in his hand, and read:—

"The people of Paris are in arms and on the march to Versailles. The town is in an uproar. The van of the procession is already in sight, on the road to the palace. Within an hour they will storm the gates."

The Queen stood for a moment lost in thought before she set out for Versailles.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The 5th and 6th of October, 1789—The Royal Family leave Versailles.

THE meeting of the National Assembly had been a stormy one that day. The King had long since changed his mind about ratifying all that had been resolved upon the night of August 4th. He definitely sent a message to the meeting to the effect that it was not possible to judge of such important laws except in their entirety, but that he would nevertheless agree to them in consideration of the threatening aspect of affairs, and on the condition that the executive power should resume its former influence.

"If we consent to the King's proposition," Robespierre had exclaimed on the subject, "there will be no constitution at all, and no claim to have one."

Several of the other deputies had expressed the same opinion.

The procession of women had hardly reached Versailles before a deputation with Maillard at their head rushed into the hall of the National Assembly. They were at first moderate in their demands. "When we visit the King and the National Assembly," Maillard said, "when we wish to soften and appease, we do not come in warlike guise." He had sent the guns to the rear that they might not be seen, and had persuaded the women on their arrival at Versailles to begin singing "Henri Quatre."

"We are come," he continued, addressing the members, "to ask for bread, and to demand that the guards who insulted our cockade shall be punished. We are all good patriots."

Some of the deputies of the National Assembly replied with friendly words, others with threats. A priest offered his hand to a woman to kiss, but she pushed it roughly away, saying:—

"I was not made to kiss a dog's paw."

Someone suggested that they should go to the King and represent to him the deplorable condition of Paris. This advice was received with approval, and a fresh deputation was soon on the way to the royal palace, where they found everything in the wildest confusion.

The King, who had been summoned from the hunting field, was walking aimlessly up and down while giving the most contradictory orders, which were instantly recalled. First he thought of flight, then he said he would remain in Versailles; finally, that he would go to Paris.

It was the Queen alone who preserved her calm and self-possession.

"I know that they are come to take my life," she said. "My mother taught me not to fear death. I will wait patiently for it."

The Minister, Saint Priest, advised the Queen to escape, but he wished the King to remain, and show fight and resistance in accordance with his duty.

Marie Antoinette consented to leave, but not without the King, who was far too irresolute to be left alone.

"Then you must flee at once," said Saint Priest, "and the King must put himself at the head of his troops."

The Queen tried to persuade her husband, and orders were given for carriages to be got ready. But Louis could come to no decision—he ran round the room with long strides, exclaiming:—

"A king in flight! A king in flight!" In the meantime the carriage had driven up to the gates, and Marie Antoinette was again entreated to flee alone; but no persuasion could move her.

"Danger is at hand," she said quietly; "my place is at the King's side."

Meanwhile the deputation of women had obtained an interview with the King, and a pretty young woman named Louison Chabry had been chosen as spokeswoman.

When she saw Louis she was so overcome that she could only utter the word "Bread," and then fainted away.

The King got help for her, and when she attempted to kiss his hand on leaving he embraced her like a father, gave her a written order for corn to be distributed, and commanded that every hindrance to the supply of provisions in Paris should

be removed. But hunger and hate were still raging round the palace. The open places and roads were full of armed men and ragged women, shrieking for bread, but really thirsting for blood. Every now and again a soldier in the royal guard was recognized and bespattered with mud, or cudgelled by the mob. Some had installed themselves in the Guards' barracks, others in the hall of the National Assembly, while men with sinister expressions and threatening gestures went in and out among the masses, and communicated their evil designs. They all knew that the Queen's life was in danger, and this formed the subject of whispered words on all sides.

Rain was streaming down, and night and darkness coming on. The streets were barely lighted by a few poor lamps, all the shops were closed, and these crowds from Paris were hammering at the doors, calling out for food.

Towards midnight Lafayette arrived at the head of the National Guards, and as he entered Versailles he had made the men swear again their oath of allegiance to the laws and their King.

He went alone and at once into the palace, and all eyes sought to read on his countenance if he came as friend or enemy.

"Here comes Cromwell," said one courtier.

"Sir," answered Lafayette with dignity, "Cromwell would never have ventured here alone."

He explained to the King that with his 20,000 men he felt himself quite capable of restoring order.

It was by this time between two and three o'clock in the morning. Maillard and the majority of the women, among them Louison Chabry, had returned to Paris immediately on the arrival of the General.

The King went to bed, the Queen too retired to seek rest, and for the moment all seemed quiet in the town. The National Guards were wet through and exhausted, they simply longed for food and to get dry, though it was with extreme difficulty that Lafayette could find them quarters for the night; he himself found shelter in the house of his relation, the Comte de Noailles.

But it was the calm before the storm. The streets were filled with numberless groups of people, tattered and filthy with mud and rain, while among the dark bushes of the park plans of

bloodshed and revenge intermingled with those of secret greed and ambition.

Many were sleeping as they leant against the iron railings in front of the palace, their wild countenances betraying, even in their dreams, thoughts of hate and revolt; while close beside them lay noisy drunken women.

Early in the morning they howled round the palace:—

"We will cut out the Queen's heart from her breast, we will make cockades of her entrails."

Marie Antoinette was aroused out of her short sleep between five and six o'clock. The noise was heard under her window which came from the dense crowds who had pushed their way into the garden, screaming:—

"The Austrian shall die! Where is that vile woman whose throat we will cut?"

An officer was heard to ask how he could manage to approach Marie Antoinette's bedroom, and a soldier, who knew the way, put himself at the head of the throng.

"What are they doing now?" asked the Queen, terrified at the noise.

A lady-in-waiting drew the curtain aside and looked out. "It is the women from Paris," she said, "who could not find a resting place for the night, and are walking about waiting for the day to dawn."

Marie Antoinette accepted the answer and asked nothing further. A few minutes passed. Then suddenly a confused noise of voices, pistol shots, and shrieks was heard in the direction of the "Court of Marble."

The staircases and adjoining rooms were filled with raging crowds, who attacked the royal body-guard as they vainly strove to stem the impetuous advance.

Two young men were knocked down, bathed in blood, but one —his name was Miomandre—preserved sufficient presence of mind before he fell to open the door of the Queen's ante-room and shout:—

"Save Her Majesty! They mean to kill her!"

One of the ladies-in-waiting heard the words and barricaded the door.

"Get out of bed," she shrieked to the Queen; "you must not wait to dress, hasten to the King!"

The Queen sprang up. Her stockings were hastily drawn on; one lady threw a skirt over her head without waiting to fasten it, while another covered her shoulders with a kerchief.

And thus, half clothed, she rushed to the King's rooms.

"Open the door, open the door," she cried in despair.

The noise and shrieks came nearer and nearer. Miomandre lay a corpse by the side of his comrade Repaire, while the Queen's ladies in vain redoubled their knocking at the door in mortal terror. For five long minutes not a sound was heard. "Open the door! In the name of Heaven open the door!" Marie Antoinette besought again.

At last a servant opened it. The King, who had also been roused by the noise, had seen the crowd on the square, and had noticed that they were moving towards the door leading to the Queen's rooms.

He had hastened down to her succour by means of the secret staircase which connected her apartments with his own, while she was hurrying to him. On hearing that she had fled to his rooms he turned back and arrived a few minutes after her. Almost at the same moment the Princess Elisabeth and the royal children appeared. The Queen took them in her arms, covered them with kisses, wept over them, and almost stifled them with caresses. The Dauphin cried and clung to her skirt, while Marie Thérèse, choking with sobs, pressed close to her mother's side.

All this time the crowd, still shouting fiercely, were pressing wildly on each other outside the palace and in the "Court of Marble." Several of the body-guard were killed, and the heads of the two doorkeepers were cut off and carried in triumph round the square.

The Comte de Provence and his wife, the King's aunts, the court, and domestics had meanwhile gradually assembled.

Louis took counsel, while the Queen stood alone in a window recess staring fixedly before her with a strange, weird look, and eyes red with weeping. The crowd did not see her, but she heard their screams and threats. Lafayette was at last roused by the noise; he collected his men, who swore to sacrifice their lives for

the King, and with their help he managed to drive the mob out of the palace. The court, grateful to him for their present release, overwhelmed him with thanks for his timely appearance.

The Comte de Provence seized him by both hands, while the Princess Adelaide kissed him and exclaimed, "You have saved us all!"

Marie Antoinette alone did not thank him. She turned to Madame Necker and said, as the burning tears streamed from her eyes, "They mean to force the King and me to accompany them to Paris, and they will carry the heads of our body-guard on the points of their lances at the head of the procession which shall conduct us to the capital."

The crowds that had been chased from the palace assembled under the windows, screaming:—

"To Paris! We will take them to Paris with us, we will not leave without them."

"We want to see the King," shouted others; "let him show himself."

Louis stepped on to the balcony, accompanied by Lafayette.

"He wishes us well, and we like him on the whole," said a few among the crowd as they looked up at him; "but he is ruled by his wife, and it is she who is the cause of all our misfortunes."

Fresh shrieks were heard in the rooms, proceeding from the grounds and the barracks.

"The Queen!" howled the mob. "We *must* see her!"

Marie Antoinette acted as her mother had done on that memorable day in Pressburg: she took the Dauphin in her arms, and holding her daughter by the hand, showed herself to the people.

But the reception she met with was in striking contrast to the homage rendered to Maria Theresa by the Hungarians. Not a single Frenchman shouted "We will die for our Queen."

"No children!" they shrieked, with insulting words about herself and the Polignac family, while others again shouted still louder:—

"Long live the people! Long live the Duc d'Orléans!"

Marie Antoinette hastily withdrew with her children.

But yet again the cries were heard: "We *will* have the Queen out upon the balcony—the Queen alone!"

"Madame," said Lafayette, "the people are clamouring to see you."

"Sir," she replied, "can you really require me to show myself alone to them? Do you not see the menacing signs they are making? Can you not hear their threats against me?"

But the General persisted in his demand.

"Well," said the Queen, "I will go, even if it is to death."

She put her children from her, and alone, with her hands crossed on her breast, she stepped out on to the balcony, and remained standing there. She was simply dressed and her hair was in disorder. With her lips pressed closely together and her head raised she was learning to face death. Hundreds of weapons were pointed at her. One man raised his gun and aimed at her, but did not dare to fire. She stood for two minutes, which seemed a year. Lafayette, who remained at her side, kissed her hand.

Then there was a movement among the crowd. The Queen's courage had brought about a revulsion of feeling, and wrath was changed into admiration of her fearlessness with death in sight.

"Long live the General! Long live the Queen!" the people screamed.

But Marie Antoinette could no longer trust their favour.

It was in this fearful morning hour that her bright hair became white, and under a portrait which she had painted for the Princesse de Lamballe she wrote in memory of the awful time:—

"Sorrow has bleached my hair."*

Fresh shouts were again heard, "We *will* take the King to Paris." Louis hesitated. He took counsel with his Ministers; he turned to Lafayette for advice.

The General appealed to the Queen to learn her opinion.

* Madame Campan asserts in her *Mémoires* that the Queen's hair turned white during the journey from Varennes. Montjoye, on the contrary, in his *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, relates that it occurred in the October days of 1789. The account seems the more probable, for Montjoye wrote his history much nearer to that date than Madame Campan compiled her *Mémoires*. On the other hand, it is very remarkable that Count Axel Fersen, who saw the Royal Family in 1792, has not mentioned the circumstance in his diary. If he had not previously seen that the Queen's hair was white the change must have struck him, and he would certainly have spoken of the fact.

"I see the fate that is awaiting me," she said, "but it is my duty to die at the King's feet, and in the arms of my children."

It was decided that they should go, and written announcements were scattered among the throng to pacify them with the tidings that the King had consented to accompany them.

The Royal Family therefore left for the capital, conducted thither by the people.

It was a strange procession, headed by women sitting on cannons laughing and singing.

"We are bringing the baker, his wife, and their lad with us!" they shouted. They were wearing the hats and shoulder-knots of the National Guard, and loaves, or pieces of bread, dangling from the lances they held in their hands.

On the road they fell in with some carts with a good supply of flour—a welcome sight for a famishing city.

These were followed by soldiers carrying green boughs in their hands, after them came carriages with Ministers, ladies, and deputies, and finally the Royal Family, while the mob, on their return march to Paris, surged either immediately before or after the King.

The roads were thronged with half-drunken, armed men and women, making their way as best they could on foot, on horseback, in hired vehicles, or carts they had met on the road. Highwaymen and shrieking furies surrounded the royal coach, while the disarmed guards, exhausted with fatigue and hunger, dragged themselves along among the crowd in the rear.

Hardly a word was spoken in the carriage. Marie Antoinette sat silent and immovable. But when she heard even the aimless firing of a gun she shuddered with fear for her children, and could not restrain her tears when the Dauphin complained of hunger.

They drove at a foot's pace for six long hours, while the mob near the coach either shouted cruel insults to the Queen, or boasted of their victory in her hearing.

She replied with kind words. "The King has never had any other desire than the happiness of his people," she said. "We do not wish you ill, we love all Frenchmen."

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Most of those present were astounded at her courage, while some exclaimed:—

"We did not know you before."

Marie Antoinette once looked out of the carriage window just to see how far they were on their journey, which to-day seemed interminable. She cast her eyes back towards Versailles, the scene of her joys and sorrows, and then looked forwards to the capital. Her thoughts travelled further still, as fearful threatening pictures presented themselves to her imagination. And yet the future had far greater sorrow in store for her than she could possibly conceive, even in this trying moment.

CHAPTER XXIV.

In the Tuileries—The Princesse de Lamballe returns to Court—Marie Antoinette's Letters to the Princesse de Lamballe and to the Duchesse de Polignac—Hatred to the Queen continues.

It was evening when the procession reached Paris. Instead of enjoying the rest they longed for after such an exciting day, the Royal Family had to drive through the principal streets and crowds of people, who dragged their carriage to the Hotel de Ville, where ranting, empty speeches alternated with derisive insults.

Bailly spoke in flowery language, and said how pleased the Parisians were to welcome the Royal Family within their walls. The Queen controlled herself and forced herself to smile, though exhausted with fatigue and looking pale as death.

The King replied to Bailly that it always gave him pleasure and inspired him with confidence to visit his good Parisians.

The Mayor repeated to those present that the King was always glad to be among his people.

"And has confidence in them," added Marie Antoinette, who considered the word an important one.

"It is of better omen that Your Majesty should say so," rejoined Bailly, turning to the Queen, "than that I should have made use of the expression."

It was not till ten o'clock at night that they reached the Tuileries, which had been uninhabited for 125 years, and looked dark and gloomy as the grave.

The doors would not shut, the paint on the floors was worn and cracked, and the tapestries were hanging in rags from the walls.

A few workmen were hastily performing the most urgent

repairs, but the poor little Dauphin had to pass the night in a room open on every side.

"Everything is so ugly here, mamma," he said as he entered.

"My son," replied Marie Antoinette, "Louis XIV. lived here, and liked it. *We* must not be more exacting than he was."

The Queen had hardly arrived when she remembered that she had forgotten to bring any clothes for herself and her children. She had to ask the permission of the National Assembly to allow her to send to Versailles for bedding and other things that had been forgotten on their hasty departure. Furniture, too, was needed, and for several days men were incessantly seen on the road between the old residence and the Tuileries.

The members of the Government and their wives called on October 7th to condole with the royal couple, and to congratulate the Queen on her fortitude.

Marie Antoinette's proud heart winced at the thought that these people should be witnesses of her humiliation. With royal dignity in every look and gesture, but in a voice that cut them to the heart, she apologised for the disorder and poverty of her home.

"You see," she said, as her voice quivered with emotion, "we were not aware that we should have to come here."

"We, too, were moved," says Madame de Staël, who relates the incident, "and found ourselves unable to utter a word in reply."

"Each one must arrange as best he can for himself," the King had said, whimpering, when he entered the Tuileries; "I shall find a place for myself."

But after his first outbreak of ill-humour was past he went over the palace, accompanied by the Queen. They selected between them the rooms they wished to occupy, and gave orders for such repairs as were absolutely necessary.

Louis chose a suite of rooms on the second floor, with a couple of smaller ones below. He took for his bedroom the one that Louis XIV. had occupied in his time, which was used by Napoleon I. later on, and also by his own brothers.

Marie Antoinette had her apartments on the first floor, level with the garden—a bedroom, dressing-room, and boudoir. Her children were upstairs close to the King.

The aunts, who had accompanied them to Paris, lived in Marsan's Pavilion, formerly occupied by the gouvernantes of the royal children. One half of the Flora Pavilion was arranged for the Princess Elisabeth, the other for the Princesse de Lamballe. The Comte and the Comtesse de Provence went to the Luxembourg.

They gradually got accustomed to their new homes, and in the early days of their residence in the capital a sort of calm seemed to rule over all. During the week following their arrival in Paris Louis and Marie Antoinette received visits from most of the principal citizens, and the deputations which came one after another were all welcomed with kindness by the King, who seems to have quickly forgotten the disturbances in Versailles.

Such of the nobility who had not left the city considered it their duty to visit the court as often as possible. The ladies carried enormous bouquets of lilies in their hands, and wore bows of white silk ribbon.

Etiquette was much the same as it had been at Versailles, with the difference that the Royal Family dined in public every Thursday and Sunday in order to satisfy the curiosity of the Parisians. But the nobles fulfilled their duties in sadness, for they were far from sharing the King's confidence, and the National Guard — the soldiers of the Revolution — who were stationed round the palace, only inspired them with distrust and alarm.

The very women who had sat upon the cannon, and accompanied the royal couple amid threats and execrations, came to do homage to the Queen in Paris, and Marie Antoinette had to appear on the balcony to return their greetings. Her hat shaded part of her face, and the women begged her to remove it that they might see her better, and she yielded to their wishes.

The following day the palace was literally besieged by crowds, and their intrusion was carried so far that many women climbed up by the window frames and jumped into the apartments of the Princess Elisabeth.

The Tuileries gardens were thronged, and the Queen had to appear at every moment, controlling herself and smiling, while her heart was breaking with anxiety.

When the women had called her to the window they began their conversation:—

"You must send away those courtiers, they will be the ruin of the King," they counselled her. "You must love the good citizens of Paris."

"I loved you when I was in Versailles," replied Marie Antoinette, "and I will love you equally now that I am here."

One woman observed, "We were told yesterday that you meant to flee beyond the frontier."

"You believe all that you are told," said the Queen; "that is the cause of our misfortunes."

"We shall not leave you again," shrieked some among the crowd.

"We wish for nothing better than to remain among you," the Queen answered. "We desire that hatred may be quenched, and that bloodshed, which we abhor, may cease. Repeat these words to all among you who cannot hear me."

Before leaving, the women often begged for some souvenir of their visit, and the Queen had to distribute flowers among them.

"It would be impossible," wrote the Princess Elisabeth, "to be more gracious and courageous than the Queen was during these days."

The Monarchy was now nothing more than a toy with which the masses amused themselves before breaking it finally to pieces.

The town councillors begged the Queen to frequent the theatre, that the people might satisfy their longing to see her.

"I cannot go to places of amusement, and so quickly forget the manner of our entrance into Paris," she replied.

A whole world lay between the ashy-pale and silent Marie Antoinette of the Tuileries and the Marie Antoinette who had herself acted comedies in Trianon. A sort of dull despair had come over her since that terrible morning in Versailles. The remembrance of the tragic scenes before the departure of the Royal Family was still embittering every hour of her life, and visibly destroying her beauty. "Le Châtelet"—a tribunal invested with extraordinary judicial authority—made enquiries about the disturbances of the 5th and 6th of October. Witnesses were

called, who swore to the insults addressed to the Royal Family, and especially to the Queen, who was asked to assist in punishing the guilty by telling all that she had heard or could remember.

"I saw everything, I knew everything, and I have forgotten everything," she replied.

When the committee pressed her to say more, she added:—

"I will never appear as an accuser against the King's subjects."

There were many contradictory reports current in reference to those miserable days in Versailles.

Suspicions of sharing in the disturbances rested—although unjustly—both on the Duc d'Orléans and on Mirabeau.

The Duchesse d'Orléans, who was separated from her husband, was in despair when she heard that his name was connected with the affair.

She hastened to the Queen, opened her heart to her, and entreated her not to withdraw her favour from her.

The Duchess had no share in the persecution with which her husband annoyed his royal relatives, and the friendship between her and Marie Antoinette remained unshaken.

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The Queen could not live without companionship. The more closely difficulties grew up around her, and the more clearly she saw herself forsaken, the more eagerly she longed for the support of confidential intercourse.

In her thoughtless youth the Queen, whose delight was to mock and ridicule others, had allowed the Princesse de Lamballe to leave her court with a smile. But even when Madame de Polignac's star was in the ascendant she had occasionally shown her some marks of attention; and a letter is extant to the Princesse de Lamballe dated Nov. 25th, 1781, in which we read:—

"I see that you still care for me, my dear Lamballe; it is such a pleasure to me to see your dear handwriting that I do not know how I can repay you. . . ."

The King had never relaxed in his attention to the Princess, who was the only one of his wife's friends of whom he took the least notice.

In 1780 he sent her on her "name day" a prayer-book which his mother had given him, accompanied by the following words:—

"Madame! Dear cousin!

"To-day is your 'name day.' I beg you to accept this book which came to me from my mother, and in which I learned to pray to God. I beseech Him on your behalf. May He grant a blessing on your virtues!"

The Queen added the following postscript:—

"My dear heart!

"I too will make use of this opportunity to speak to you of my friendship. I come after the King, but I must rank with him in my attachment to you. My children love you too, and we pray to God on our knees for your happiness. The children know well, my dear Lamballe, that you love them as your own; they bear you in their hearts, and name you in their prayers."

Then at the very end the Princess Marie Thérèse wrote:—

"Madame! I shall never forget you.—Your cousin,

"Marie Thérèse."

Marie Antoinette's languishing friendship seemed to revive after the birth of the Duc de Normandie.

About this time she wrote to the Princess:—

"You must never believe that it would be possible for me to leave off loving you. It is a habit to which my heart clings."

"Come and see me," she wrote after the death of her younger daughter. "We will mingle our tears over the departure of my poor little angel. My heart yearns for all the comfort that your tenderness can give."

While those terrible scenes were being enacted in Versailles, the Princesse de Lamballe and the Duchesse d'Orléans were spending a few quiet days with the Duc de Penthièvre in his castle at Eu.

At nine o'clock in the evening of October 7th a courier arrived, covered with dust, and riding a horse ready to drop with fatigue. It was he who brought the first intelligence that the

Royal Family was in the Tuileries, together with some details of what had been occurring in Versailles the last few days.

The friendship which had been rejected by Marie Antoinette was as warm as ever on the part of the Princesse de Lamballe. No sooner did she fully realize that the sinister forebodings of a revolution had become a reality than her plans were made. The dangers which Marie Antoinette experienced only attracted her friend back to the court where life itself seemed to be in peril. She was not wanted when all was bright, and her wish to be the first amongst the Queen's friends had not been granted. But when the storm began she hastened to her post of danger and devotion, and remained the companion in misfortune, the firm friend in the awful hours that were to come.

In the darkest of nights, towards twelve o'clock, she left her father-in-law's peaceful home for Paris, which she reached the evening of October 8th.

The servant on duty saw a veiled lady alight from a carriage, then the close embrace of two women.

It was not without great difficulty that she persuaded the King to allow her to resume her old office of intendante, for Louis' genuine attachment to her urged him to insist on her absence from court.

Marie Antoinette was at first too glad to see her again, too fearful of losing her a second time, to be able to entertain such anxious thoughts. In her loneliness she pined for the support of a kindred soul. And when the Princess again returned to her father-in-law for a short time, she wrote her letters full of longing and kind reproaches that the Princess was not more prudent with regard to her health.

"I am so grieved you do not take care of yourself," she wrote to her November 7th, 1789. "Listen to me, my dear Lamballe, I am quite angry with you. My health is fairly good, and my children's excellent; they are constantly with me, and occupy me a great deal. The Dauphin is easier to manage, not so passionate. My daughter is very affectionate, and the poor child longs to see you again. . . . I am grieved at the course of events, although there seems to be a turn for the better. But we dare not flatter ourselves, for even among my friends there are many

who are lacking in energy, and have no firmness to resist the least opposition from those who wish us ill. . . ."

"The Dauphin has asked for you many times to help him with his garden," she wrote another day. "He has improved so much that there is every hope he will overcome these violent outbursts of passion. He worships me, and I love him madly. . . ."

If the Queen could have foreseen a tithe of what had already happened she would never have believed it possible that she could survive it. So many events succeeded each other with such rapidity that her powers of resistance became weakened and her spirit almost crushed under dejection and despair.

Silence and depression reigned in the palace, and there was hardly a ray of brightness to disperse the clouds of sorrow.

Madame de Lamballe was the only person that could cheer Marie Antoinette, whose anxious mind found rest as she looked into her friend's steadfast blue eyes, so full of earnest tenderness.

A sort of presentiment of her future fate lay in every feature and movement of the Princess, a shadow of patient suffering and sorrow.

And yet she had strength to smile, to master her own fear, in order to drive despondency from her friend, and to brighten her home of pain and mourning by her fascinating presence.

"Light as a bird," says Lescure, "she came to entice the Queen away from her foreboding thoughts."

But although this old friendship was renewed in all its former strength, Marie Antoinette did not forget the favourite whom she had sent away. With anxious thoughts she followed Madame de Polignac in her flight, and was never tired of writing to her, overwhelming her with tender words as if she had been sitting by her side. She often wrote to her every other day, and on one occasion she sent to her twice in the same day.

Nothing that concerned the fugitive was forgotten by the Queen. In every letter to her friend there is the same solicitude, the same caressing language. She sympathises in all her cares and interests, and flatters herself that her feelings are reciprocated. She seats herself at her writing-table without knowing what she will say, and can hardly write for her tears; and it is as though Madame de Polignac had taken with her

a portion of her very heart, so completely does the Queen seem to live with her still.

"But one word, my dear heart," she wrote to Madame de Polignac in July, 1789. "I cannot resist the pleasure of embracing you yet again. I wrote to you three days ago through Herr de M., who allows me to read all your letters, and with whom I talk about you incessantly. If you only knew with what anxiety we have followed you, and with what joy we heard of your safety. I have acted the best for you this time. All has been peaceful since I wrote last, though our prospects are very gloomy. My chief comfort is to caress my children, and to think of you, dear heart!"

July 29th she wrote:—

"I cannot, dear heart, let the safe opportunity which has presented itself slip by without writing to you again to-day. It gives me such pleasure that I have thanked my husband a hundred times, because he has sent me his letter. You know that I love and embrace you, especially under present circumstances. Our position does not seem to be improving, and you have probably heard of the events of July 14th. I cannot forget the horrors and bloodshed of that day. God grant that my husband may be enabled to carry out his plans for good, the one and only thing that he desires. The speech which he made in the National Assembly has produced some effect, for all right-minded people are supporting us. But events occur rapidly, and lead on one knows not whither. You can form no conception of the plots that are being formed all around us. I hear of them every day, even in my own house. Oh, my dear friend, I feel so sad and depressed. Herr N. [Necker] has just arrived, after seeing you and talking to you. His return is a complete triumph. May he be able to prevent the scenes of bloodshed that are soiling this beautiful kingdom! Farewell, farewell, my dear heart! I embrace you and yours with fervour."

On the third page of one of the Queen's letters to Madame de Polignac are the following lines in a child's handwriting:—

"Madame,

"I was so very sorry when I heard that you were gone, but be quite certain that I shall never forget you."

Marie Antoinette took the pen from her daughter's hand and added:—

"These three lines were dictated by genuine feeling and simplicity. The poor child came in while I was writing. I suggested that she should write, and left her quite alone. She was not told a word, the thought is her own, and I like to send it as it stands."

A little later on the Queen wrote to her friend:—

"You speak of my courage. I assure you it needed less fortitude to live through those awful moments that are past than day by day to be patient with our position, to bear our own sorrows, and to sympathize with those of our friends who are near us. This is a heavy burden, and if I were not so deeply attached to my husband, my children, and my friends, I could wish to die. But I keep up, and I have to thank you that I can do so. But I am a source of misfortune to you all, and I know well how grieved you are for me."

August 12th she wrote:—

"My health is fairly good, though it is naturally somewhat weakened by the shocks which I continually receive. We are surrounded by sorrow, misfortune, and mourners—not to speak of those who are absent. Everyone is leaving Paris, and I can only rejoice that all who are interested in me should be far away. I am alone in my rooms all day, I see nobody, and my children are my only resource."

August 31st she again wrote to her friend:—

"I see that you still cling to me, and I long for your sympathy, for I am painfully depressed and despairing, although the events of the last few days seem to point to a more favourable issue; but we can rely on nothing. The evil-disposed are in possession of such advantages that they have every means of perverting and impeding the course of justice. Their number is, however, less; for the good in all ranks and positions are combining, which is the best that can happen for us. I can give you no other news, for when one has reached the stage in which we are now, and especially when one is so far away from the other, it is certain that the least word may awaken undue anxiety, or hold out

delusive hopes. But always remember that opposition has not weakened either my strength or my courage."

September 14th we read in a letter from Marie Antoinette to the Duchesse de Polignac:—

"I wept with emotion, my dear heart, when I read your letter. Oh, do not believe that I forget you! Your friendship is inscribed in my heart with indelible characters; it is my comfort, that and my children, whom I never leave.

"I have more than ever need of the support of my recollections, and of all my courage; but for the sake of my son I will keep up and follow my painful path to the end. It is in sorrow that we feel what we are, and the blood that flows in my veins cannot lie. I think of you and yours, my dear friend, which is the best means of forgetting the treachery with which I am surrounded. We are more in danger from the cowardice of our friends than from the conspiracy of our enemies. The former are at variance and expose their want of unity, whilst they turn a deaf ear to the leaders of the Revolution, who counsel order and moderation. Pity me, dear heart, but, above all, love me. I shall love you and yours to my latest breath, and embrace you now with fervour."

"How happy I feel," wrote the Queen again another time to Madame de Polignac, "to know that you are safe. For myself I look for death—insults, threats, disgusting coarseness, meet me every moment of the day. Love me. . . ."

January 7th, 1790, she wrote:—

"I cannot resist the longing to embrace you, dear heart, but it must be in haste, for the opportunity which presents itself is unexpected but sure, and these few lines will reach you by post in a large parcel, all for you. We are watched like criminals, and it is indeed hard to be patient under such restraint. To be continually anxious about those nearest to you, not to be able to appear at a window without being overwhelmed with insults, or to take the poor innocent children into the fresh air without exposing them to shouts and cries; what a position, dear heart! Then, if one had only one's own sorrows to bear. But to live in anxiety for the King, for all that is dearest on earth, for present and absent friends, all this is a burden too heavy to bear.

But I have already told you all this; I will restrain myself. Farewell, dear heart, let us trust in God, who knows our conscience and can see that we are filled with the sincerest solicitude for the country. I embrace you!

"MARIE ANTOINETTE.

"The King has just come in and will add a word."

Louis wrote at the foot of the letter: "I will only tell you, dear Duchess, that you are in no wise forgotten here, that we regret to receive so few letters from you, and that whether present or absent, you are beloved—you and yours.—LOUIS."

This letter was the last but one that reached Madame de Polignac from her royal friend. The unhappy Queen was surrounded by spies, and had to relinquish the correspondence which had been so comforting to her.

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Active opposition seemed to cease for a time during the first few weeks of the Royal Family's residence in Paris.

The King rose early, and devoted an hour to prayer and reading. Then he went downstairs to say good-morning to the Queen and his children. He breakfasted alone, attended by a single faithful servant; but the Queen sometimes came to him during the meal to talk about business. He spent the forenoon in study, especially in examining in minutest detail the history of Charles I. of England, inspired by the hope that he might learn to avoid the errors of which that monarch had been guilty.

He gave up hunting, which in former days had been his greatest pleasure, but he went long rides with Lafayette and other officers, and during the early days of his stay in Paris he regularly walked in the Tuileries gardens.

Marie Antoinette, too, occupied herself as usual. In the morning she superintended the education of her children, and employed a good deal of her time in writing letters, or doing large pieces of needlework.

Twice a week she received the members of the court before attending Mass with the King. And in the beginning of her residence in Paris she had a few evening parties, when she saw

those that remained of the old nobility and some of the new officials, who were gradually replacing the aristocracy of the former *régime*. But the danger that threatened the Royal Family was just as great as before their removal to Paris. The people were irritated by the continued scarcity and by the violent debates in the National Assembly. The Queen was hated and scorned as persistently as ever; though fat, good-natured Louis, whose appearance bespoke fatherly kindness and placid content, had always been liked. And if Marie Antoinette had not followed him to Paris, but could have resolved to leave the country alone, it is not at all improbable that the devotion of the people to the King would have been aroused afresh.

There were many, even among the Royalists, who wished the Queen's death and tried to poison her, so that her best friends urged her not to touch the dishes that were placed on her table. But, in speaking to Madame Campan on the subject, Marie Antoinette said:—

"They are mistaken; not a single drop of poison will be used for me. It is not the fashion in this century; scandal is used, a much safer instrument, and I feel that I shall die, a sacrifice to its influence."

A separation between the royal pair was suggested, and in a conversation with Marie Antoinette, Lafayette observed, with cynical frankness, that he and many others much wished to see her separated from her husband.

"We could accuse you of adultery in order to gain our object," he said. The Queen opposed the proposition with dignity and firmness, but from that day she never heard the General's name without being overcome with nervous excitement.

Lafayette continually offered her counsel, but she rejected it every time, without even examining its value; and one day, when he told her about a probable plan of the Duc d'Orléans to usurp the throne, she coldly asked, and with direct reference to himself:

"Is it necessary to be a prince to entertain such a project?"

She never forgot the insult that Lafayette had cast in her teeth, which was undoubtedly the cause of the ill-will and distrust which she nourished against him to the very last.

CHAPTER XXV.

Emigration—The King attends the National Assembly—Favras' Execution—Death of the Emperor Joseph.

EMIGRATION, which had begun during the last few months in Versailles, increased after the Royal Family had been dragged to Paris, where the Tuileries was little more than a prison. The court party grew less and less as the nobles hastily left the land in crowds, and Louis, who had been waited upon by hundreds, could now only count on a small number of attendants, among them noble-hearted Clery, who accompanied him to the tower in the Temple.

Emigration thinned the ranks everywhere. It had begun at the foot of the throne in close relationship to the royal pair, then followed the landed nobility and the clergy, while the officers, who were all of high birth, left *en masse*. Nothing similar had been witnessed since the days of old, when the people wandered forth to flee from the invading Romans.

Necker had already lamented, September, 1789, that in the course of less than a fortnight passports had been given to 6000 of the richest inhabitants of France.

At the close of the same year Switzerland was so full of French refugees that house rent had increased everywhere to considerably more than the original purchase-money. England and Italy also gave shelter to numbers of the greatest and most renowned families of France.

It became the fashion to emigrate.

Officers boasted as they forsook the field of battle, and nobles as they left their King alone. Young, high-spirited men met together in Coblentz, dressed in blue coats, red vests, and yellow

trousers, wearing buttons with three lilies—the badges of the emigrant host.

They assembled in the German towns as in a patriotic meeting, alleging that the King's brother must certainly know best what was becoming in the adherents of their sovereign. As the Comte d'Artois had thought it right to seek this foreign land, it must surely be the best place for all faithful nobles.

Louis, who never knew what he wanted or what he ought to do, was unable to decide in this crisis whether he should blame or encourage this emigration, which alternately filled him with fear and hope. He condemned it officially, but in the depths of his heart he hoped to utilise it. There were secret agents, as well as relations and subjects among the refugees, and although he spoke disparagingly of them all in one moment, in the next he wished that he too were with them.

It cannot be denied emigration was a grave error. It is easy to understand that a faithful aristocracy should accompany their sovereign in his flight; but in this instance the nobles and clergy of France left their King alone, surrounded by the greatest dangers, while they themselves wandered from court to court, instead of remaining at their posts. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the nobles were in a most unhappy condition under the Revolution, for those who fled sacrificed their estates and were condemned to banishment, which it was said in France should be permanent. Those who remained in their country were suspected, persecuted, and finally guillotined; while those who sought refuge in the army were not safe, even if they performed prodigies of valour.

The year 1790 dawned more portentous, more fraught with danger than the close of the old year had been. Fire and plunder continued in the provinces, while assault and murder were the order of the day in the capital.

Disturbances and errors on the part of the court gave occasion to so many unwarranted accusations that the Ministers, with Necker at their head, advised the King to take some decided step which should prove that he had accepted the new order of things.

February 4th [1790] it was announced to the President of the

National Assembly that Louis intended to be present at their meeting, and wished to be received without ceremony.

A red velvet cloth embroidered with white lilies was hastily thrown over the seat of the President, who remained standing by the side.

The King entered at one o'clock in ordinary dress, and without attendants. The meeting rose to welcome him, while people crowded in and filled the galleries, to wait in eager excitement to hear what Louis would say.

The moment was an important one. The monarch felt that he *must* gain a hearing this time, that defeat would be doubly disastrous.

In a speech drawn up by Necker he referred to the disturbances which had shaken his kingdom. He wished, he said, to enter into closer relationship with the representatives of the people, especially now when resolutions had been laid before him which would lead to changes in the country. He was willing to co-operate with all his might in the establishing of this new *régime*. Every effort to subvert it should meet with punishment, and he was ready to further it by every means at his disposal.

He finally reminded them of the sacrifices that he had made, and called upon all those who had suffered loss to imitate his resignation, and to derive comfort from the expectation of the good things that the new constitution promised to the country.

"In conjunction with the Queen, who shares my views," he continued, "I will early train my son's mind and heart to understand the fresh conditions which circumstances have developed. . . . . You, who can influence my misguided people through so many channels, must enlighten them in reference to their true interests—these people who are so dear to me, and of whose devotion I am assured by those who would comfort me in my sorrows."

The speech was received with applause and emotion, while the meeting thanked the King and overwhelmed him with good wishes. Crowds conducted him back to the palace, and it was resolved to present him and the Queen with a grateful address. Paris was again *en fête*.

By this act the King had pledged himself to uphold the new constitution.

The National Assembly would not be outdone by him. Every member came forward and swore to maintain the Government, as ordered by the National Assembly and the King.

The Queen, too, was acknowledged, and she wrote to the Princesse de Lamballe :—

"Dear Friend,—Regret that you were not in Paris. We have not had such a day for a whole year. . . . It is so sweet to hope, and I shall yield to the feeling. Even if it should prove nothing more than an illusion, it is a comfort to my heart, because it reassures me about the future fate of my children. Return as quickly as you can, dear friend, that you may see how happy I am. It may last such a short time that you must not lose the opportunity."

These bursts of enthusiasm were as fickle as the waves, and illusions of peace and reconciliation were extinguished as rapidly as the illuminations themselves.

In the happiest days of her life warning visions of future ill had continually troubled the mind of Marie Antoinette, and her presentiments were now to become a fearful reality.

At the same time that means were taken to pacify the people, and to arouse, if only a shadow of, the old devotion to the Royal Family, the rulers and the court were called upon to change their habits, even in the smallest detail, and neither the King nor the Queen could understand this claim upon them.

The errors of the royal pair were aggravated by the arrogance and injudiciousness of their court. While the enthusiasm over the King's speech was still warm in all hearts they affronted the citizens by receiving their deputies in quite a different manner to those of the nobility, which seemed to show that they did not consider the former to be of the same flesh and blood as the aristocracy.

After a momentary respite the people renewed their clamours and their persecution of the King and Queen and their friends. During the winter crowds assembled nearly every day under the windows of the Tuileries, shouting insults against Marie Antoinette, while shots were fired during the night. A real

prison probably housed less misery than this palace, which had been the home of none but royalty. The Queen could not refrain from exclaiming bitterly, "How amazed my mother would have been to see me in such surroundings—me, the daughter of an emperor, the wife of a king, the mother of a king; at any rate, the mother of a child who is destined to become a king!"

* * * * * *

It was reported that a French nobleman, named Favras, who had travelled all over Europe and was married to a foreign princess, was the author of a conspiracy against the National Assembly.

It had for its object the murder of Lafayette and Bailly, and the rescue of the King by means of 1200 horse ready in Versailles, while an army of recruits, among whom were many Swiss and Piedmontese, was prepared to join the King and advance upon Paris. Favras was denounced without being allowed to confront his accusers. Witnesses came forward and explained his plan in detail; but proofs were not forthcoming, and no sign could be found either of the presence of the 1200 horse or of the army of recruits.

In spite of the absence of proofs, a prearranged verdict was pronounced.

"There seemed to be a longing," wrote the Princess Elisabeth to Madame de Bombelles, "to terrify all who might think of serving the King. The people thirsted for blood, the blood of a man who bore the title hated of the multitude—aristocrat."

Favras was sentenced to be hanged. The populace, who rejoiced to see the sentence of the law executed on a marquis, hastened in crowds to the place where he was to die, jeering as they went. The accused smiled contemptuously on his revilers, and obstinately refused to reveal his secret.

"I pity the men who are accusing me against their own conscience," he said, "but as they insist on a victim I am glad that the choice has fallen on me. Citizens!" he cried, "I die innocent. Pray to God for me."

Then, turning to the executioner, he said :—

"Well, now, my friend, do your duty."

Two days after Favras' death one of his friends most thoughtlessly brought his mourning widow and child before the notice of the King and Queen as they were dining in public at the Tuileries.

Marie Antoinette was apparently cold and unmoved, although in the depths of her heart she was full of the warmest compassion for the deceased and his family. As soon as dinner was over she hastened as quickly as she could to her own rooms, and throwing herself exhausted into an arm-chair, she exclaimed:—

"We cannot escape when we are attacked by people who unite cunning to crime, while we are defended only by worthy folk certainly, but such as are without any clear conception of our position. I have been placed in a dilemma towards both parties by this introduction of Favras' widow and her son. If I had been free to act I would have taken the child of the man who has just died for our cause and given him a place at table between the King and myself. But, surrounded as I was by the executioners who had led his father to death, I dared not even look at him. The royal party will blame me for not adopting the poor child; the friends of the Revolution will feel aggrieved at the thought that the sight of him was meant to give me pleasure."

February 27th brought a letter from her brother Leopold to say that the Emperor Joseph had died in Vienna.

The political difficulties in which the young Emperor had involved himself, even if he had lived, would probably have hindered him from materially assisting Marie Antoinette; but she missed in him a brother whom she deeply loved, as well as a sound adviser and friend.

A few days before his death he had written a tender, touching letter to her in which he had expressed the deepest regret that he had to leave her in such a cruel position, and his sorrow that he could not give her substantial proofs of the devotion he had always felt towards her.

In one of the last letters to his brother and successor he had previously written:—

"Like you, I am deeply grieved concerning the calumnies that are current about the Queen of France. But what can we do with

such mad, impudent people? They cannot be dissuaded from believing that my sister sent me millions of francs in secret, while I, for my part, cannot conceive either why I should have asked her for them or why she should have sent them to me. I have never accepted a single coin from France."

"The loss which I have sustained," wrote Marie Antoinette to Madame de Polignac on her brother's death, "has made me very unhappy. But the strength and fortitude which he preserved to his last moment will at all events evoke the respect and admiration of the world. I venture to say that he died as became our race."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Marie Antoinette as Mother—Traits in the Character of Louis XVII.

DAYS and months succeeded each other in the Tuileries filled with anxiety and excitement.

Lafayette expected an attack on the palace during the night of April 13th, and communicated his apprehensions to the King.

Louis rose and went to the Queen's apartments, but she was not there. Then he hastened in fear to the children's bedroom, where he found his wife holding her son in her arms.

"I was looking for you; you have frightened me terribly!" exclaimed the breathless King.

"I was at my post," answered the Queen, as she pressed the Dauphin to her heart.

The walks which she took with her children for their health's sake frequently exposed her to cruel speeches and threatening looks. "The Queen and the royal children look unhappy," relates Madame Elliot, and in truth they had every reason to do so. There were few people who showed the Queen the smallest sign of respect, and those who months ago would have lain in the dust at her feet passed by and bespattered her from head to foot with mud.

As her misery increased Marie Antoinette clung more and more closely to her children. Her love as a mother gave her at the same time her greatest joy and her deepest sorrow. She could not look at the Dauphin without tears. Will this child, who seemed to have the promise of such a brilliant future, be a ruler or a martyr? With less and less to do with the world, she devoted her time to her son and daughter.

She remembered how her own mother had taken the imperial

children in Vienna to see the sick and destitute, and did the same with her own little ones. She accompanied them to the hospital, and taught them to distribute gifts with kind and comforting words.

After the flight of the Duchesse de Polignac, Madame de Tourzel became gouvernante to the royal children.

The following letter from the Queen to this lady explains better than many words the solicitude of Marie Antoinette both for son and daughter:—

"*July 24th*, 1789.

"In two days my son will be four years and four months old. I will not speak of his appearance or his external advantages. You will see him. His health has always been good, but even in the cradle we noticed that his nerves were very weak, and that the least unusual sound affected him. He cut his first teeth very late, but they came without sickness or difficulty. It was only with one, the last—I think it was the sixth—that he had convulsions at Fontainebleau. Since then he has had them twice, in the winter of '87–88, and again when he was inoculated; but this last attack was very slight. On account of his weak nerves, any noise to which he is not accustomed always alarms him. For instance, he is afraid of dogs, because he once heard their bark close to him. I have never forced him to notice them, because I believe that his fear will decrease as he becomes more reasonable.

"He is very impetuous and violent when his anger is roused, but he is a good child, gentle and loving when his passion is over. He has an inordinately good opinion of himself, which, if carefully guided, may turn to his advantage. He is perfectly faithful when he has promised anything, but he is too frank, and often repeats what he has heard, sometimes adding details suggested by his imagination without the least intention of being untrue. This is his greatest fault, which we must strive to correct. On the whole—I repeat it—he is a good child; and with kindness and firmness, without severity, we can do what we like with him. But severity only rouses him, as he is very determined for his age. To give you an example, the words 'forgive me' have displeased him from his earliest childhood. If he has been in the wrong he will acknowledge it in a roundabout way, but the

expression 'forgive me' he will not utter without tears and endless trouble.

"My son cannot read, and learns with difficulty; he is too heedless to be persevering. He has no thoughts of greatness in his head, and I hope this will long continue, for our children learn quite soon enough what they are. He loves his sister heartily. If a thing pleases him, either that he may go to some place or other, or something has been given to him, his first impulse is always to ask for the same for his sister. He is naturally cheerful. For his health's sake he ought to be much in the fresh air, and I think that it is better to let him both work and play on the terrace rather than take him further away. The exercise which little children take when they play and run about freely is much healthier than forced walking, which is often trying to the back.

"I will now tell you of his surroundings. There are three sub-gouvernantes — Mesdames de Soucy, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and Madame de Villefort. Madame de Soucy, senior, is a particularly amiable woman, very well-informed and exact, but with bad manners. Her daughter-in-law is like her in this respect, but without intelligence. She has not been with my daughter lately, but she does very well with the little boy, as she is reliable and a little strict with him. Madame de Villefort is exactly the opposite, for she spoils him. She has just as bad, if not worse, manners. They are all on mutually good terms. The two chief waiting-women are devoted to both the children. But Madame Lemoine is an inveterate gossip, and repeats everything she hears, in the children's presence or not—it is all the same to her. Madame Neuville is nice-looking, intelligent, and straightforward, though it is said that she is ruled by her mother, a mischievous woman.

"Brunier, the doctor, has my entire confidence whenever the children are ill, but in every other occasion he must be kept in his place; he is forward, noisy, and familiar.

"Abbé d'Avreux is all very well to teach my son his alphabet, but neither his manners nor general acquirements fit him to be much with my children, and for this reason I have taken my daughter away from him. We have to see that he is not too

familiar with my son out of lesson hours, a point which gave great trouble to Madame de Polignac, and she was not always able to prevent it; he ranks with the sub-gouvernantes. About ten days ago I was told of some ungrateful expressions of the Abbé, which greatly annoyed me.

"My son has eight waiting-women. They are zealous in their attendance, but I cannot have much confidence in them. Many unsuitable things have been discussed in the children's rooms lately, but I cannot say exactly by whom. There is a certain Madame Belliard among them who does not disguise her feelings. So without suspecting anybody it is my duty to be at my post.

"All his male attendants are faithful, quiet, and devoted to him.

"My daughter has two chief waiting-women and seven others. Madame Brunier, the doctor's wife, has been with her since her birth, and serves her with fidelity. But though I have not a word to say against her, I would never take her into my own service. She resembles her husband in character, and is too greedy and anxious about the perquisites which belong to her post.

"Her daughter, Madame Tremindille, is an admirable woman, and although only twenty-seven she has many good qualities belonging to riper years. She has been with my daughter from her birth, and I have watched her continually. I brought about her marriage, and the time that she does not spend with my daughter is occupied entirely with the bringing up of her three little girls. She is gentle, sociable, and very well-informed, so that I look to her to undertake the further instruction of the Princess instead of Abbé d'Avreux. She is quite capable of doing it, and as I am fortunate in feeling every confidence in her, I am sure this plan will be preferable. Besides, my daughter is very fond of her and trusts her. The other seven ladies are good subordinates, and this apartment is more peaceful than my son's.

"The male attendants have been with her from her birth. They are quite ordinary men, but as they have nothing to do beyond their service, and as they only remain in the ante-room, they are indifferent to me. MARIE ANTOINETTE."

The little Dauphin was a charming child, with blue eyes, long, curly hair, fresh, rosy cheeks, and a bright smile, which sorrow was so soon to change into a sad one.

Nobody understood him better than his mother, who had watched his faults with close and strict attention, but also nobody saw his attractive qualities more clearly than she did.

Vigilant as she was to detect any weakness, she spared no pains to strengthen and form his character. Endowed with an innate tendency to good, which produced his frankness, he was nevertheless passionate and disobedient, faults which called for strict treatment. The mother had often to resist his caresses, which so easily disarmed her, and strengthen herself against his plausible excuses to escape punishment.

One day she heard him whistling during lesson hours, and went in to reprove him.

"Mamma-Queen," cried the little one, without waiting for her reprimand, "I was whistling to myself!"

He was not fond of learning, but his filial love overcame his dislike. His mother reproached him one day that he could not read, although he was five and a half years old.

He replied, "I will learn to read as a New Year's gift to you, Mamma-Queen."

Madame de Tourzel relates that at the end of November he said to his teacher:—

"I want to know how much time there is before New Year's Day, for I have promised Mamma to be able to read by that time."

When he heard that there only wanted a month, he said quite calmly:—

"Give me now two lessons every day, my good Abbé, and I shall be able to do it."

He kept his word, and on the appointed day he triumphantly entered the Queen's room, holding a book in his hand. He threw his arms round her neck, saying:—

"See, here is your New Year's gift. I have kept my promise. I can read now."

In the neighbourhood of the Tuileries, close to the banks of the Seine, was a little garden, belonging to the house in which

the Dauphin's tutor lived. Madame de Tourzel persuaded the King to give this piece of ground to the Dauphin, who took possession of it with intense delight. This same little garden was given later on by Napoleon I. to the King of Rome, by Charles X. to the Duc de Bordeaux, and by Louis Philippe to the Comte de Paris.

"How many warnings," says Beauchesne, "have been sown in that strip of earth, which so soon had to be forsaken by its young owners! One died in prison when ten years old. The second (the Duc de Reichstadt) was driven from home in his infancy, and only lived long enough to understand the glory attached to his father's name, and to die in possession of his own first sword. The third disappeared, like so many others, in the reign of terror; and the fourth was a fugitive, spending his time alternately in Austria and England."

In this little garden the Dauphin looked after his hens and ducks, cultivated his flowers, played and worked in perfect freedom. While passion was raging in the National Assembly and in the streets of Paris he was watching his flowers with keen attention, that he might choose the very best to tie up into nosegays for his mother.

He went into her room quite early every morning, laid his flowers on her bed, and then hid himself behind the curtains. When Marie Antoinette awoke and saw the nosegay she used to say, "My little son is not far away."

The ladies tried to impress on the child that there were plenty of gardeners about the palace, and that the Queen had flowers enough.

"No other flowers give her as much pleasure as those I gather for her," was his answer.

He always tried to please his mother. He rejoiced to see her smile, and suffered when he saw her weep, though without understanding the cause of her tears.

One day he heard a lady of the court say of a friend:—

"She is as happy as a queen."

"You are not speaking of *my* mother," exclaimed Charles Louis, "for my mother is always crying."

When he had been industrious during lesson hours Marie

Antoinette played with him, or went with him to his little garden. She took pleasure in seeing him run before her in the avenues of the park, and tied up the flowers that he gathered.

"It would be impossible," says Madame de Tourzel, "to see a more attractive and intelligent child, or one that expresses himself with more grace."

He took every opportunity of saying pleasant things to those about him. One day, after a few weeks' holiday, Marie Antoinette was present during the Abbé's instruction.

"If I am not mistaken," said the teacher, "I spoke to you in our last lesson about positive, comparative, and superlative. But, of course, you have forgotten it!"

"You are mistaken," replied the Dauphin; "I remember it all. It is positive if I say: My teacher, the Abbé, is a good teacher. It is comparative if I say: My teacher, the Abbé, is better than other teachers. Superlative, he continued, as he looked towards the Queen, is when I say: My mother is the best of all mothers!"

There are hundreds of pretty anecdotes recorded of the child. The Baroness Oberkirch relates the following:—

"One day Charles Louis wished to purchase a toy, but he was told that it was too expensive.

"'When I say my evening prayers,' he said, 'I shall add a few words to our Lord, to ask if He will be kind enough to make me rich.'

"The old servant, who was undressing him, thought it his duty to reprove him.

"'Your Royal Highness must not pray to God for riches, but for wisdom,' he said.

"'My dear Joseph,' answered the Dauphin, 'when I am saying my prayers I can just as well ask God to give me both.'

"One day, when Bailly came into the room, he ran up to him and asked:—

"'Monsieur Bailly, what is it they are going to do to papa and mamma? Everybody round us is crying.'

"Another day Bertrand de Molleville was with the Queen. The Dauphin was hopping about the room, singing and playing with a wooden sword, when he was fetched to have his supper. In a second he had disappeared, but the Queen called him back.

"'My child,' she said, 'you left the room without bowing to Monsieur de Molleville.'

"'Mamma,' answered the Dauphin, who went on hopping, 'it was because I am quite sure that Monsieur de Molleville is one of our friends. Good-night, Monsieur de Molleville!'

"'He is a dear child, is he not?' said Marie Antoinette. 'It is a good thing he is so young, and cannot feel what we suffer, while his brightness is a real help to us.'

"Hue, his valet, once saw the Dauphin throw himself into some bushes, and told him it was a pity to run the risk of scratching his face on purpose.

"The child haughtily replied:—

"'That is the thorny path that leads to fame.'

"But the Queen did not approve of this kind of heroism, and told him that it was anything but praiseworthy to put out his eyes by rushing into a hedge, and that he had better wait to talk about fame until he had learnt what it costs to win it.

"The Dauphin reddened, ran up to his mother, and kissed her hand.

"He was really just as much devoted to the King, but the respect he felt for his father prevented him from being as much at his ease in his company as with his mother, for whom he had always some kind or loving word.

"One of the places that most attracted the Dauphin was an asylum for destitute and orphan children. The Queen often took him there, and the poor foundlings were always glad to see him and thankful for his visits.

"One day his father found him busily arranging some gold pieces in a little box which his Aunt Elisabeth had given him.

"'How is it, Charles,' said his father, in a displeased tone, 'that you are scraping money together like a miser?'

"The Dauphin blushed, but answered quickly:—

"'Yes, father, I am scraping my money together, but it is for those poor children. If you were to see them I am sure you too would have pity on them.'

"The King embraced him, and said, 'If that is the case, my child, and you are saving for the poor, I will gladly help you to fill your box.'"

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Summer of 1790—Fête on the Champs de Mars—The Queen and Mirabeau.

THE spring came, but it brought neither alleviation to the sorrows of the royal pair, nor cessation to the persecution of the people.

The Queen was pining for fresh country air. In her happy days she had been fond of St. Cloud, and now she wished to go there again for a few summer months, hoping to be sheltered from the shouts and insults of the populace.

The whole royal party went, accompanied by Lafayette and his adjutants. Marie Antoinette was full of delight to be able to sit on the grass once again with her children, to walk in the garden, or rest under the shady trees without being startled every moment by noise and angry cries. Then she could more freely enjoy the pleasures of her correspondence with friends and relations here than in Paris.

Their stay lasted for the whole summer, but every Sunday and on special occasions they drove to the capital, that the people might see their King and Queen.

Although Marie Antoinette was always thankful to return to St. Cloud as quickly as possible, she felt it was prudent to accede to the wishes of the people, and show herself frequently in her unfriendly capital.

"We ought not to yield to their shrieks," the Queen said in a letter to Comte Mercy-Argenteau; "but it is as well to know that we are near enough to the city to be able to drive in if there is really something to do."

The National Assembly had determined that the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille should be celebrated with great ceremony.

The Champs de Mars was selected as the place where the representatives of all the French provinces and all the royal troops were to assemble.

"I cannot think of the approaching event without a shudder," the Queen wrote to Comte Mercy. "For us it will mean all that is painful and trying, but we *must* be present."

Preparations had been going on for weeks with zeal and perfect harmony. Men and women of all ages, parties, and positions gave their assistance to the cause.

Deputies from all parts of the country were received at the Tuileries and entertained before the real fête day arrived.

The 14th July dawned gloomy and wet. Crowds jostled each other in the streets, collected on the bridges, and took possession of every window. A platform was erected for the King, deputies, and ambassadors.

Louis had expressed the wish that places might be assigned to his family by his side, but the National Assembly refused his request, and a few days before the ceremony it was decreed that the King was to appear alone, with the President of the Assembly on his left hand.

This was a fresh proof of their distrust of the Royal Family, especially of Marie Antoinette, whom they so pointedly separated from her husband and the representatives of the nation.

As Marie Antoinette could not receive permission to show herself by the King's side, it was arranged that she and the other members of the Royal Family should witness the pageant from the window of a military school. The King accompanied them, and remained with his family until all were assembled, when he took the place assigned to him among the deputies. The Archbishop blessed the banners, and a *Te Deum* was sung.

When divine service was over Lafayette stepped up to the altar and, in the name of the people, swore fidelity to the law and the King.

The shout "I swear!" was repeated in the next moment by the 300,000 people assembled on the occasion.

The cannon thundered, the flags waved, and hats and soldiers' caps were thrown up into the air.

The King rose and stretched out his hand towards a picture of the Saviour.

"I, King of the French," he shouted in a loud voice, "swear to use the authority which the constitutional laws of the State have granted me, to maintain the fundamental laws as prescribed by the National Assembly and accepted by me."

The Queen became excited with enthusiasm; she took the heir to the throne in her arms and leant forward towards the crowd, as she shouted from the window:—

"Here is my son! He and I both entertain the same sentiments as the King."

This unexpected, spontaneous response was rewarded by the enthusiasm of thousands. The flags were waved, the church bells were rung, and singing and rejoicing were heard on all sides.

The fêtes lasted for many days, in spite of the incessant rain, which was powerless to damp such an outburst of excitement. The majority of the provincial deputies were delighted to see the Royal Family so close, and were charmed with the amiability of the King and the graceful dignity of the Queen.

They came in crowds quite early in the morning to the Tuileries garden, and the little Dauphin had continually to show himself on the balcony, from which he threw flowers and green boughs down among the people, who greeted him with shouts of welcome.

"Alas!" says Thiers, "in moments like these hatred lost its sting, arrogance was cast aside, all were happy in the good fortune of others, and proud that they deserved it. How can it be that such affecting, unanimous joy can so soon sink into forgetfulness?"

The deputies at last left Paris, and the Royal Family returned to St. Cloud.

"We have come back well satisfied," wrote the Queen, "in so far as one can be satisfied with applause."

These festivities proved to be the very last opportunity that fate had in store for the King to regain his lost authority. Paris was at this time by no means pleased with the National Assembly, who seemed to them slow in granting the exemptions that had been promised to the people.

The provincial deputies, whom tradition attracted to the object of their fathers' veneration, were well received by the Royal Family. And Necker, who had lost the confidence and affection of the people, was dismissed for the last time.

But unfortunately there was no event or circumstance capable of giving power of will to Louis XVI. These fêtes that were so full of promise for the reconciliation of all parties only brought about fresh disturbances and causes for further complaints against the King, who was accused of perjury at the solemn meeting.

"Alas! my dear heart," wrote the Queen to the Princesse de Lamballe, "we must pray that God in His mercy will look upon us. This race of tigers, that seems to reign in the kingdom, would indeed feel a savage joy if they knew what we are suffering."

In the meantime the court party had begun to attach themselves to Mirabeau.

The Comte de la Marck, a son of the Prince d'Aremberg, and a distant connection of the imperial house of Austria, had come to France on the marriage of Marie Antoinette. He had stood high in the favour of Maria Theresa and was well received in Paris, and eventually joined the army in America under the French flag. He was respectfully devoted to Marie Antoinette in the days of her prosperity, and proved himself a faithful counsellor when troubles came.

La Marck had unexpectedly made the personal acquaintance of Mirabeau, and entertained the greatest admiration for his talents.

He discovered that the powerful leader of the people still liked to realize his noble descent, and that the Revolution had by no means affected the blue blood that flowed in his veins. He repeatedly assisted Mirabeau with money, and he hoped that the latter's incessant pecuniary difficulties would induce the court to secure him as a useful ally. La Marck zealously and perseveringly sought to bring him into relationship with the King and Queen, but it was long before he could obtain a favourable hearing.

"We shall not sink so low, I trust," said Marie Antoinette, "as to be obliged to seek help from Mirabeau."

About the middle of April, 1790, Mirabeau had a secret interview with Marie Antoinette's old friend, Count Mercy, and the following day La Marck was summoned to the Queen, who told him, that after consulting with the King she had resolved to enter into negotiations with the dreaded republican leader.

She then asked La Marck rather timidly if he did not think that Mirabeau had a share in the horrible scenes of the 5th and 6th of October.

Her friend hastened to reassure her on this point. Mirabeau had spent the greater part of these days in his company, and they were dining together when the arrival of the mob procession from Paris was announced.

"I am glad," said the Queen, "for I have been longing to be undeceived on this point."

Mirabeau's remarkable talents as an orator and a statesman had made him the leader of the Revolution. But he was not blind to the abyss into which the movement might precipitate France, and good sense withheld him from entirely upsetting the Monarchy.

He sent his first diplomatic suggestions to the court, and the Queen assured him through La Marck that the King approved of them.

She then questioned La Marck as to what could be done to attach Mirabeau still more closely to their party, and what would satisfy him.

La Marck repeated the question to his friend, and Mirabeau replied that he wished to have his debts paid, and that he would be glad to receive a monthly allowance for the future. The following day La Marck again went to the Queen.

"While we are waiting for the King," she said, "I will not delay to tell you that he has determined to pay Mirabeau's debts."

In accordance with the royal promise considerable sums were at once sent to the leader. La Marck had by no means disguised from Mirabeau the Queen's unfavourable opinion of him; but for all this, the leader eagerly wished to enter into personal relationship with Her Majesty.

He wrote, entreated, and persisted in his wish to see her, till at last Marie Antoinette agreed to grant him an audience.

July 3rd, 1790, was appointed as the day of the meeting, and both parties took the strictest precautions that the interview should remain a secret.

In order to hide his movements Mirabeau had spent the previous day at Auteuil with his niece, Madame d'Aragon, and the following morning his nephew accompanied him on his drive by a side road, which led up towards St. Cloud. Mirabeau alighted at a gate leading into the park, where a nobleman stood ready to receive him, and Marie Antoinette was close at hand in a retired spot of her private garden, half hidden by bushes; and here the Queen by birth and the King by virtue of his genius met face to face.

Marie Antoinette had hitherto looked upon the revolutionary leader as a being to be abhorred, as one of the bitterest enemies of the Monarchy, consequently therefore of herself. She had been told that he was in the very midst of the mob during those fearful days in October exciting the people, who were already inflamed with hatred, hunger, and wine.

She was now in the presence of the lynx-eyed, pock-marked man, with an unusually large head, covered with masses of hair, more like a lion's mane. He pleased her, in spite of all that she had heard about him. "It is," says Carlyle, "among the honourable tokens of this high, ill-fated heart that no mind of any endowment, no Mirabeau, nay, no Barnave, no Dumouriez ever came face to face with her, but, in spite of all prepossession, she was forced to recognize it, to draw nigh to it with trust."

She spoke to him courteously and kindly, and the idolised popular leader was simply overwhelmed with respect to see her so noble, courageous, and straightforward.

"In the presence of such an opponent," said the Queen, "of a man who has sworn the destruction of the Monarchy without a thought of its utility for a great people, the step that I am taking must appear most unseemly—but in the presence of a Mirabeau . . ."

This "'in the presence of a *Mirabeau*' seemed to flatter him immensely," said Marie Antoinette, when she returned to her

faithful lady-in-waiting, Madame Campan, after the interview. Mirabeau justified himself, offered his help, and promised justice, while he described in striking language the actual state of the kingdom.

Marie Antoinette began to entertain a little hope. This man, who had shown himself so powerful to cast down, might also be strong enough to raise what had been demolished.

"At last I am listening to genuine politics," she said to him, "for although I cannot agree with all your views and opinions, I am convinced that you are a true statesman."

Their conversation lasted about three-quarters of an hour, and when Mirabeau withdrew, he said:—

"When the Empress, your exalted mother, granted one of her subjects the honour of an interview, she never dismissed him without allowing him to kiss her hand."

The Queen took off her glove and offered her hand, which the revolutionist kissed, and then said:—

"This kiss saves the kingdom." When he had returned to his nephew, who was waiting for him, he said:—

"She is a very great, very noble, and very unhappy woman, Victor, but I shall save her!"

He was mistaken. It was too late, a vain illusion, for even a Mirabeau was powerless to stem the tide of the Revolution, to control and lead such violent passions as those which were now unchained.

He submitted to the Queen many plans in writing, relative to a reconciliation between the popular party and the royal house; and, according to some accounts, she received him a few times in the apartments of the Princesse de Lamballe in the Tuileries, to which he had gained access in the disguise of a monk.* But all reports agree that he had unfeigned admiration for Marie Antoinette.

"The King," he said to Comte de la Marck, "has only one man with him, and that is the Queen."

"You do not know the Queen," he said another time, in confidence. "Her strength of mind is astounding, and for courage she is a man."

* *Mémoires relatives à la famille royale de France.*

"I like to believe," he wrote (September, 1790), "that she does not care about life without the crown. That of which I am quite sure is that she will not live if she does not retain the crown."

In the meantime the Revolution was continually developing, and though Mirabeau's voice was as powerful as ever, he failed to evoke the old enthusiasm.

One day he would defend the Monarchy in the National Assembly, and the next he would attack the King and his adherents, simply to weaken the mistrust of the people, which was becoming firmly rooted.

His position was precarious. The King only partially believed him, and the constitutional party began to doubt him, while the democrats hated him.

He wrote again and again to the Queen, and complained to the Comte de la Marck of the apathy of Louis and the irresolution of Marie Antoinette. He passed from serious representations to bitter sarcasm, and from reproaches to insult, as he spoke of the indecision and imprudence of the royal couple.

"They listen to me with more kindness than confidence," he complained, "and are more eager to hear my advice than to follow it."

He appealed to Marie Antoinette's *amour-propre*, and to her imagination, begging her to follow his counsel and *act*. But his recent speeches in the National Assembly had lessened the Queen's confidence, and made her doubt his sincerity.

The democratic count was spared from seeing the failure of the plans he had formed for the rescue of the unfortunate royal pair.

His health had been giving way for some time, and as he was going to the National Assembly, March 27th, 1791, he was obliged to stop and rest on the way at the house of his friend la Marck, where he lay for an hour in a half fainting condition. But still he attended the meeting, where he spoke eagerly on five several occasions, and then left the platform for the last time.

April 2nd he felt that death was near. Immense crowds congregated round his residence, and the court sent one messenger after another to enquire.

"Keep my head well raised," he said to his servant; "it is the strongest head in France."

"Alas!" he said in his last hour, "I bear in my heart the death song of the French Monarchy, and all that is left will become the prey of parties."

In Paris his death produced a perfect commotion among the people, who daily held meetings to deplore their loss, and the friends of the constitution agreed to wear mourning.

Marie Antoinette has left no papers which reveal her feelings on the death of the popular leader, but it is certain that the bells that were tolled at his funeral resounded mournfully in the private rooms of the royal palace. For some months previously, full of presentiment, she had often exclaimed, "I am certain that I shall not be destroyed while Mirabeau lives."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Elder Princesses leave for Rome—The Princess Elisabeth—The King and the Clergy—Permission to go to St. Cloud.

THE situation became daily more and more critical, and disturbances in the streets were a natural occurrence.

The National Assembly was not more independent than the Royal Family, for as soon as a measure displeased the dregs of the populace, riots and robberies were the invariable consequences.

During this terrible time of anxiety and revolt the Royal Family was entreated again and again to accept help and leave the country. As we have already said, the Queen had been advised long ago, and from many quarters, to flee. The King, the Princess Elisabeth, Madame de Lamballe, had all besought her to go; and even the children had folded their little hands and tried to induce her to yield to entreaty.

Even at this juncture, as well as in the beginning of the Revolution, more than one opportunity presented itself to escape unnoticed from the land. But rather than leave her husband and children Marie Antoinette endured these months and years of fear and suffering in France. Whatever her feelings for the King may have been in former days, she remained firm to him in the time of adversity.

"I ask for nothing for myself," she used to say; "it is in the King's arms, and in the midst of my children, that I will live and die."

Among all the sovereigns of Europe Pope Pius VI. was the only one who offered hospitality to the Royal Family of France. He tried to persuade all its members to shake the dust off their feet and to seek for protection in the States of the Church.

The King's aunts alone accepted the invitation. It had been the aim of both Adelaide and Victoria to hide themselves and seek to be forgotten ever since the Revolution had broken out; timid Sophie was already dead.

Their stay in France became unbearable, and they very soon had no other thought than to leave their rebellious country and remove to Rome, where they could worship in the cathedral of St. Peter.

The King did not consider it his duty to oppose the wishes of his aunts, so their passports were prepared and the announcement of their speedy arrival was forwarded to Cardinal Bernis, the French Ambassador in Rome.

The princesses were on the point of starting when an anonymous notice of their plan was sent to the Jacobin Club (February 3rd, 1791).

The members really cared very little about the old princesses, who took no part in politics; but they were afraid that their departure would be followed by that of the King and Queen.

Besides, the resolution they had taken attracted attention to the burning question of emigration in general. It was easy to put difficulties in their way, and a deputation of the members of the Town Council went to the National Assembly and to the Tuileries to protest against their departure. The furies, who used to assemble every evening in the garden of the Palais Royal, agreed to hasten to Bellevue and forcibly prevent the princesses from leaving. The latter received intelligence that these threatening females were on the road, and, without waiting to conclude the preparations for their journey, they fled, undiscovered, in a carriage belonging to a lady who had come to visit them. When the women found the house empty their fury knew no bounds. They were convinced that the princesses were taking the wealth of France away with them, and resolved to revenge themselves by at least hindering the servants from sending their luggage after them. General Berthier prevented this from happening, but he allowed them to go into every room of the Castle, and empty the princesses' wine cellars and revel in their beds.

On their return to Paris the women rushed to the Luxembourg, as they expected the Comte de Provence too was seeking flight.

They screamed for him to come till he was obliged to step out on to a balcony to talk with them, and to promise that he would not leave the country.

The revolutionary papers alluded to the departure of the princesses with a mixture of anger and contempt.

"The two old ladies are gone to Italy to try the effect of their tears and charms on the princes of that land," appeared in one paper. "The grand master of the order of Malta has sent word to the Princess Adelaide that he intends to offer her his hand and heart as soon as the sisters have left France, and that they can reckon on the support of forty-nine old and young knights. Our Holy Father intends to marry Victoria, and promises to bring about a counter-revolution with the assistance of his army of 300 men."

The journey was beset with difficulties. In one of the towns they were nearly arrested, and the populace shouted "A la lanterne." It was only through the intervention of some officers that they were able to go on their way.

In another place they were taken prisoners, and the Town Council decided they should remain in gaol until the National Assembly had sent word whether they had received permission to leave the country or not.

It was Mirabeau who obtained leave for their further journey; but the little town had no mind to accept the decision of the National Assembly, and broke out into open rebellion.

The two princesses were kept in confinement, and it was not till after they had passed twelve days under lock and key in a miserable room at the hotel that they were allowed to go on their way amid the shouts of the people.

It had been the wish of the Royal Family that the Princess Elisabeth should accompany her aunts, but she considered that her proper place was by the side of the King, who tried in vain to persuade her to leave him.

Elisabeth of France was born March 3rd, 1764, and lost both her parents when three years old. The love which the child would have had for her father and mother was bestowed in all its warmth on her brothers, especially the eldest, to whom she was devoted, and looked upon as a model, both as a man and a king.

Good-natured, phlegmatic Louis was very fond of her, and preferred her to her brothers. The attachment between them was neither intense nor enthusiastic, often cool and tinged with ill-humour on the part of the King.

But there was far more endurance and unselfishness in Elisabeth's loyalty, than in the feelings of Marie Antoinette towards her husband.

The Princess was not good-looking; she was small and undignified, with irregular features, and the very large nose of the Bourbons. But she had the freshness of youth. Her complexion was clear, and it was easy to read in her pure blue eyes that she was good and faithful. She had refused several offers of marriage. "I can marry none but a king's son," she said; "and a king's son must reign in his father's stead. Therefore I could no longer remain French, and I do not wish to leave my country. I would rather remain here at the foot of my brother's throne than occupy that of a stranger."

When it was suggested to her that she should escape from the perils in France, and accompany her aunts into exile, she said, "It would be both cruel and cowardly to leave at this juncture." From her earliest youth she was one of those simple natures who never swerve from the path that seems to be right. She was as clear and convinced in her religious views as in her other opinions, and did not wait for the hour of adversity to learn the duty of Christian resignation. In 1786 she already wrote to her friend Madame de Causans:—

"We must lay our fears, as well as our hopes, at the foot of the cross, which teaches us to bear the trials allotted to us by Heaven, for it alone can raise and comfort the soul that is cast down. Jesus was innocent, and He suffered more than we can, both spiritually and physically. . . . We have to pass through terrible moments in our lives, but it is that we may attain to unspeakable bliss hereafter. I desire, O my God, to recognize Thy almighty power, and especially to trust that whatever may happen to me *Thou* wilt never forsake me!"

The Princess had no place at court before 1778, when her gouvernante, Madame de Guéménée, presented her to the young King and Queen.

She was pious, without bigotry, intelligent and well-informed, cheerful and quick at repartee.

Marie Antoinette, who had hitherto looked upon her sister-in-law as a child, was surprised at the admirable qualities which she now discovered in her; and Elisabeth's lively spirits and deep affection greatly affected the Queen.

"I am afraid," she wrote (1778) to her mother, "that I shall become too much attached to her."

"The Queen is quite devoted to Princess Elisabeth," Madame de Bombelles wrote the following year; "she tells everybody that no one is equal to her in kindness, that she did not know her formerly, but that she has now become her friend, and that her love for her will last her whole life."

Marie Antoinette sought by every means to gain the affection of her young sister-in-law. She wished her to have her own establishment, and persuaded the King to purchase for her the house which had formerly been inhabited by the Princesse de Guéménée; then, without saying a word about it to Elisabeth, she took her to it.

"Now you are at home," she said, "this shall be your Trianon. The King, who has the privilege of giving it to you, has allowed me to be the bearer of the pleasant news."

The liking which the amiable young girl had inspired was changed into deep and steadfast devotion on the part of Marie Antoinette as her esteem for her sister-in-law's sterling qualities daily increased.

But her feelings met with no response. Taste, character, everything was different in the queen of twenty-four and the princess of sixteen; where the former yielded her confidence once, the latter was reticent and often distrustful. Elisabeth loved heaven, and longed for it. Marie Antoinette's affections were in the world, and she only looked to heaven when sorrow cried for comfort. Elisabeth's was a strong character. Marie Antoinette's was swayed by every breath, and it was impossible for her to strive steadfastly with one fixed goal in view. She made rash plans, which were continually changed—especially before the outbreak of the Revolution—and relinquished them as easily, while she listened to different counsels, and allowed herself to drift with the current.

The King's aunts were always trying to arouse Elisabeth's distrust of the Queen, while they and others were wicked enough to repeat to her the belief of the people in the shameful liaisons of which she was accused.

The Queen tried to win her sister-in-law as time went on, but Elisabeth continued distrustful, and even avoided Marie Antoinette.

In the year 1784 she wrote:—"Our opinions are so different. She is an Austrian. As for me I am a Bourbon!"

These opposite views led to incessant disputes between them, which continued to the last days of the Monarchy.

Elisabeth, who had shunned the society of Marie Antoinette in the Trianon days, became her firm and devoted friend in the Temple, where she saw the Queen in her true light. Here she recognized her worth, and reproached herself for having misjudged her so long.

* * * * * *

Before the Revolution Louis XVI. had been beloved for his gentleness. But the innumerable insults with which the Queen, the Royal Family, himself, and his adherents had been overwhelmed had embittered him to such a degree that his natural condescension had become changed into sternness, a perfectly new trait in his character.

He was not wanting in courage when he alone was exposed to threatening danger, but as soon as it menaced his family he became anxious and incapable of action.

Too great distrust in his own powers was the cause of his ruin and the loss of his throne. He listened to opposing counsels, and sought to seize the helping hands that were stretched out to him, only to cast them from him again, to feel for them another time, resolved to make use of them when the opportunity for doing so had long since fled.

He was strong and firm in one respect only—his connection with the Church, the position of which was causing uneasiness throughout the land.

In 1789 the National Assembly had determined that the French clergy should be deprived of the control of all Church

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property, and shortly afterwards it was decreed that the Church itself should be freshly organized. The number of bishoprics was to be decreased, all orders and convents were to be suppressed, and several other changes introduced.

In marked contrast with the people of Paris and the larger towns, the inhabitants of the country continued to cling fast to their old faith. This new ordering of the Church therefore roused their resentment, and at the same time greatly troubled the conscience of the King, who hesitated and deferred to sanction the fresh regulations. And when he finally (December 26th, 1790) was compelled to give his signature, it was with a trembling hand and the exclamation:—

"Better be King in Metz than in France on such terms. But this shall soon end!"

He was displeased with himself. The happiness and power that he had lost seemed as nothing to him in comparison with this step that he had been forced to take.

Pope Pius VI. strongly disapproved of the action of the King, and wrote with some severity:—

"It not only increases our anxiety, but causes us suffering to see a virtuous Prince succumb to the pressure of force, and sign papers that are contrary to the very basis of the Catholic religion."

Painful results of these new regulations soon became evident. About one-third of the priesthood refused to comply with them, and their persistency was the cause of indescribable confusion throughout the whole land.

It was almost impossible to fill up the numerous vacancies, and pressure was brought to bear on the clergy of the capital to force them to swear allegiance to the new order of things from the pulpit; but the majority were firm in their refusal.

About fifty of the clergy incurred punishment from the Bishop of Saint Sulpice for infraction of the laws of the Church, while the parish priest of Sainte Marguerite announced from the pulpit that he would not conform to the recent regulations, adding:—

"Of what will they deprive me? My office? After all it is *you* they will rob, for all that I have belongs to you. My life? I am eighty-two, and the short time that remains to me is not

of sufficient value to warrant a denial of my principles on that account."

Many of the clergy who would not subscribe, lived in seclusion in Christian households, and violently attacked those who had taken the oath.

The orthodox looked upon these latter as sinners and apostates, whose parishioners were justified in being angry and rebellious. It was no unusual occurrence for a priest to complain of his bishop from the pulpit, or of the persecution which he had to endure in the cause of liberty.

Public worship ceased to command respect, and even in the royal chapel mass was frequently interrupted, and the organist was required to repeat his voluntaries when they were acceptable to the congregation. The pews were broken in pieces, and even the presence of the King could not restrain the disturbances.

Those of the French clergy who had taken the new oath received a memorial from the Pope, April 13th, in which he ordered them to recant within the space of forty days. Such as refused were suspended from their office by the Holy Father and declared to be contumacious.

Although, as we have already said, it was only after much deliberation, and to spare the Church from still greater sacrifices, that Louis had sanctioned the new laws, he now repented bitterly of what he had done. He, who had so resignedly borne his own troubles, was appalled at the loss to the Church, and it did not tend to calm his fears to see himself day by day in presence of his sister's piety and genuine Christian behaviour.

When Louis and Marie Antoinette went to church Elisabeth refused to accompany them. Wounded in her affection for the old paths, and deeply grieved as a Christian and a Roman Catholic, she firmly withheld from accepting the new observances, and did not in the least care for the insults with which she was assailed on this account, even on the threshold of her own door. From this time there seemed to her but one course open that she could understand, which was to leave France as quickly as possible.

Easter was drawing near, and Marie Antoinette tried in vain to rouse her husband from his melancholy. Louis was longing

to partake of the Holy Eucharist on the solemn day, and gain fresh strength and comfort in his sorrow.

Although he had sanctioned the new constitution of the Church, he honestly shrank from the ministrations of those priests who had sworn to accept it. He therefore resolved to spend Holy Week in St. Cloud, where he hoped to fulfil his religious duties more easily than in Paris, which he intended to leave with his family on April 8th.

All the preparations had been openly made, but the report got abroad that the Royal Family had not the least intention of going to St. Cloud, but to the fortress of Metz. And the opponents of the Church, who were daily becoming bold, thought that even if the King did only mean to go to St. Cloud to confess and receive the Holy Eucharist, it was still an unpardonable step of the monarch, who, with his own hand, had subscribed to the new regulations.

The carriages were ready waiting in the courtyard when the King and Queen, the children, Princess Elisabeth, and Madame de Tourzel went down to take their places.

But the people had expressed their opinion, and did not mean the Royal Family to leave. Rioters had collected, with whom the National Guard on duty made common cause, and the travellers had hardly taken their seats when the carriages were surrounded by the crowd, who shrieked:—

"The constitution first, St. Cloud afterwards! Down with the fugitives! Down with those who are selling us to foreign powers!"

They climbed up by the wheels and seized the reins.

General Lafayette, who began to see that such scenes must tend to make it evident, even to other countries, that the King was a prisoner, hastened forward, trying to force his way and call his troops to order.

But they would not listen, much less obey, and shouts of:—

"The miserable aristocrats! That fat pig!" echoed round Louis and Marie Antoinette, while the others repeated the cry, "He shall not go."

"We pay him 25 millions," roared some, "and the only thing that we ask is that he should do what we want."

The Queen tried to appease the mob by speaking to them from the carriage.

"This is a singular animal here trying to give us orders," was the only rejoinder.

Exasperated by this shameful and ridiculous scene, Lafayette proceeded to use force in order to procure obedience to the law. But Louis even now could say nothing but his habitual—

"I will not have bloodshed on my account."

For two whole hours the Royal Family remained sitting in their carriages, exposed to the insults of the mob, and without being allowed to advance a single step.

Their servants were ill-treated, and the Dauphin's tutor was so beaten that the child began to cry. Threats and commands, even entreaties, were all useless, and to avoid even worse treatment the journey had to be relinquished.

Triumphant in their victory, the National Guard now suddenly assured the royal pair of their devotion, those nearest to the Queen exclaiming:—

"You need not be anxious, we shall continue to protect you."

"We rely upon you," answered Marie Antoinette ironically; "but at this moment you must confess that we are your prisoners."

Then she took her son into her arms, and with proud dignity re-entered the palace.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Preparations for Flight—Count Fersen—Departure from Paris.

THE October days of 1789 had sufficiently proved that the dangers which threatened the Royal Family were traceable, not only to the National Assembly, but possibly still more evidently to the excited populace of Paris; and the events of April 18th, 1791, left no doubt of the fact that the King and Queen were prisoners in the Tuileries.

Mirabeau had been the first to form a plan for their flight. We know, however, that the King showed very little inclination to follow the advice of the high-born popular leader, and had shrunk more than once from accepting any scheme that was traced out for him.

It was otherwise with the Queen. Mirabeau was dead, but his suggestion was fixed in her mind, and she looked upon secret flight as the last chance of safety in the shipwreck which was engulfing so many of her proudest dreams.

She earnestly tried to induce the King to flee, and from the autumn of 1790 he really seemed to be entertaining the thought of escape; but he could neither resign himself without misgivings, nor make his preparations with courage and resolution.

One day he would yield and consent to go, the next he would recall his promise. And at the very slightest reassuring sign or appearance of returning allegiance on the part of the people, he would again sink back into his usual trusting supineness.

Louis had been able calmly to watch his kingdom fall to pieces. He had been able to forgive all personal insults, but as a Christian he could not tolerate that he should be deprived of the performance of his religious duties and spending Holy Week in peace at St. Cloud.

It was this riot of April 18th which induced him to decide upon flight.

But that which would have been easy to carry out in 1789, and which would have been possible in 1790, presented innumerable difficulties in 1791. It was evident from the behaviour of the people that the profoundest secrecy was necessary for the arrangement and accomplishment of any plans.

Preparatory steps for flight had already been taken in the early part of the winter, and General Marquis de Bouillé, Lafayette's cousin, but not his friend, had offered his services to the royal pair.

Bouillé was commanding the troops in Alsace Lorraine, Franche Comté, and Champagne. He was a courageous soldier, a daring leader, and not wanting in ambition.

He was not one of those unalterable royalists who hated the Revolution, but he had attached himself in all sincerity to the new order of things as long as they seemed to him to be compatible with his fidelity to his Sovereign. A constitutional kingdom was the wish of his heart, and his devotion to Louis XVI. was rather the result of his political views than of any chivalrous feeling.

He had managed to retain the confidence of his troops during the long-continued disturbances in France, and was really the only French leader who at that time had not been under the necessity of quelling revolt among his subordinates.

In the summer of 1790 one regiment in Nancy had risen against their colonel, but with severe and summary measures they had quickly been brought back to obedience, and the National Assembly had gratefully recognized his services on the occasion.

When the General realized that the King was a prisoner he immediately thought of means for his deliverance.

He had already communicated with him in the early days of November, 1790, and in a cipher letter conveyed by Baron Goguelat had urged him to withdraw without delay to some town on the frontier.

Bouillé promised to cover the flight, and to place his troops at the King's disposal if they continued firm in their loyalty. There

was no doubt of their being quite strong enough to ensure the safety of the Royal Family.

We have seen that Louis was by no means eager to seize his opportunity.

Indeed, he seemed to forget Bouillé's counsel, although the General warned him that the prevalent disaffection was beginning to show itself among his own troops, and that he could not long guarantee the fidelity of more than a few regiments.

It was not till the failure of his intended visit to St. Cloud had roused Louis that he sent Baron Goguelat back to Bouillé to say that in accordance with the latter's suggestion he had resolved to leave Paris. Two days after the events recorded in the last chapter Marie Antoinette wrote to her brother, the Emperor Leopold:—

"We remained for about two hours without being able to advance or retreat, and the insults and coarse language to which we were exposed during this time cannot be repeated. At last, completely wearied out, we were compelled to return to the palace.

"The children were very good during these violent proceedings, but it made them quite ill afterwards. The King and I had the same thought—such a condition of things *must* be brought to an end, and we shall have to adopt the measures which we have already discussed. Therefore be prepared for a sudden departure. Everything shall be in readiness, and I will daily send you news of our progress if I can possibly find an opportunity to do so. The plan is full of appalling difficulties, but our present position is so untenable that any other must be preferable. My children are crying at this very minute because they cannot get out into the fresh air."

The King told Bouillé that he intended to leave Paris May 15th, and take refuge with the General's troops in Montmédy, not far from the frontier.

On receipt of this message Bouillé at once proceeded to take all precautionary steps. He saw the necessity of justifying the movements of the troops by some show of threatened danger, and he advised the King to persuade the Emperor Leopold to allow the Austrian soldiers to advance and pretend to attack the

frontier, near Montmédy, which would serve as an excuse for Bouillé to concentrate his troops in the vicinity of that town. He, moreover, counselled the King to take some trustworthy man with him on his flight, who could be of assistance to him in any unforeseen event, and pointed out the Marquis d'Agoult as especially suited for the office.

The day appointed certainly seemed at a distant date, but the Austrians could not be ready earlier; and besides, the King wished to touch the 2,000,000 francs which were paid to him from the State Treasury the 15th of each month.

Bouillé had taken upon himself all the needful preparations between Châlons and Montmédy, while Marie Antoinette and her faithful friend, Count Fersen, saw to those between Paris and Châlons.

Owing to increasing disturbances Fersen had not been able to leave the country, and while the majority of the Queen's friends had selfishly fled from her, this foreign nobleman had remained at hand, animated with the sole desire of being of use to her in the time of trouble.

He had conceived for Marie Antoinette one of those rare, disinterested, warm friendships which lie on the borderland of love and passion.

While persecution was aging her, and robbing her of her beauty, he never forgot that he had been the favoured knight and courtier of the brilliant Queen.

She was deeply touched with his devotion in her desolate condition; and when he now offered her his strength and protection, with the same delicacy that he had used when formerly hiding his admiration and attachment, she did not hesitate to accept his helping hand.

She and the King, as prisoners, were unable to act, and therefore left everything to the Count, who undertook the preparations for their flight.

Royal personages were not accustomed to haste in their journeys in those days.

Bouillé had proposed that they should use light English carriages, which were convenient and fashionable for travelling. The King, his daughter, and sister might have had one, the

Queen and the Dauphin a second. But in the meantime Marie Antoinette would not consent to travel otherwise than in the same carriage with the King.

"You wish to rescue us; well, let it be all of us, or none," she said.

In spite of the zeal displayed by Fersen in his efforts to save the royal pair, and although the flight on the whole was planned with great discretion, there were some mistakes, the most glaring of which was a carriage calculated to awaken suspicion from its unusual size.

An English lady, named Sullivan, offered to procure a suitable vehicle, and went to a builder, from whom she ordered a coach, under the name of Baroness Korff, which was to be capacious enough to hold nine persons, six inside and three on the box. It was no slight task to execute such an order, and the *soi-disant* Russian baroness continually visited the builder to ascertain the progress of his work.

The carriage was ready by the appointed date, and the following day a bill was handed to the foreign lady for 5944 francs, a considerable sum in the year 1791!

The journey was postponed from May to June. Early in the month the coach was taken to Fersen's hotel, as he considered it prudent to test the fitness of this cumbrous machine, to which he harnessed six strong horses, and then took a rapid trial drive out towards Vincennes. Unluckily he met the Duc d'Orléans, who was walking with his mistress, Madame Buffon, and as the vehicle rushed past the Prince recognized Count Fersen, who was in the act of whipping up the horses.

"Are you mad, Count?" he shouted. "You are running great risks and endangering your life."

"I am driving myself that my carriage may not be broken to pieces," replied the Count as he pulled up.

"Why is the coach such a size? Are you thinking of carrying off the entire *corps de ballet?*"

"No, Your Royal Highness, I leave that to you. Farewell."

"Adieu, a pleasant journey to you!"

This meeting ought to have made Fersen prudent. He knew how the Duke, who hated his royal cousin, would at the first

news of the King's flight naturally think of the huge coach he had seen, and name it to his persecutors.

But Fersen never thought of this, and the carriage stood for a whole week in his courtyard, visible to all.

The journey was again delayed, this time from the 15th to the 20th of June.

To ensure the success of the plan from the beginning, means had to be taken to blind the numerous spies that surrounded them, and here was the first opportunity for Louis XVI. to make a practical use of his talent as a mechanic. By the help of a couple of trusty servants he made a door in his sister's room, which it was almost impossible to discover without a minute examination of the wall. Their exit was therefore secured, the coach was ready, and there only remained to obtain a passport, for which Mrs. Sullivan again offered her services, and, as the Baroness Korff, asked for a passport for herself, her two children, their gouvernante, and a valet. As she did not dare to remain in Paris after having promoted their flight, she gave out that it had been burnt by an unfortunate accident. A fresh one was prepared, and by the help of this she left the capital two days before the Royal Family. All these arrangements were made with the greatest secrecy. "Nothing is known in the city," Fersen wrote in his diary.

He had found means to elude the vigilance of the guard, and had had many interviews with the King and Queen. Finally, on the evening of Thursday, June 16th, he had gone to the Tuileries to take suitable clothes to Marie Antoinette, in order to disguise herself, her sister-in-law, and her children.

At the last moment the flight was delayed yet again for twenty-four hours, on account of the Queen's mistrust of a lady's-maid. And at the same time Bouillé received a letter in which the King told him that the Marquis d'Agoult could not accompany him for want of room, as the children's gouvernante insisted on her right to be present with her charges.

The day at last arrived. The Tuileries bore their accustomed appearance, and the children were put to bed as usual. The King and Queen also retired to rest, to get up again immediately after they had dismissed their attendants.

The King dressed himself in shabby clothes, while Marie Antoinette and the Princess Elisabeth dressed themselves in those that Fersen had brought them, and then went to wake the children.

Marie Thérèse got up quickly, but the Dauphin, who was roused out of his first sleep, was more startled, and could not understand what was going on. As he was being dressed in girl's clothes he asked drowsily, "Are we going to act a play?"

At half-past eleven the disguises were completed. Elisabeth, Marie Thérèse, the Dauphin, and Madame de Tourzel went down to the drawing-room, where their two waiting-maids were ready.

The King and Queen followed immediately, and leading her children by the hand the latter descended the staircase first, followed by the others. In order to avoid notice it had been arranged that they should cross the courtyard in separate groups.

The gouvernante went first with the two children, and reached the coach without difficulty. Count Fersen, who was on the box as driver, sprang down and helped them.

It was now a quarter to eleven, and at this very minute Lafayette was walking through the palace garden, but he observed nothing.

Half an hour later the Princess Elisabeth arrived, and the King close behind her.

But still the Queen was not there. Nearly an hour went by, and the occupants of the carriage as they leaned back in the corners hardly dared to breathe or look at each other from sheer anxiety. Marie Antoinette had seen all those whom she so dearly loved leave the Tuileries in safety, and she herself was the last to follow. She had met Lafayette and, terrified, had hidden by some dark buildings. Then, short-sighted as she was, she missed her way among the narrow lanes of that quarter of the city, and out of breath, in feverish haste, without realizing where she was, rushed forward. She heard the Seine flowing under her, and then saw the lights on the bridge glimmering in the darkness. Then she realized her mistake and that she must retrace her steps in order to reach the other side of the river.

She finally appealed to a soldier, who, without recognizing her, showed her the way to the Place du Carrousel.

She hastened on through the arches along the Seine. A carriage was coming towards her, and again it was Lafayette, who was returning home after going his nightly round. He was certain that the palace was well guarded, and that the Royal Family was safely asleep.

The Queen had barely time to hide herself in the shadow of a wall to avoid being run over or recognized.

Then she hurried on again, crossed the square, and breathless, exhausted as she was, believed all was lost.

At last she perceived Fersen's carriage and threw herself into it. She could not speak, and in her haste trod on the foot of the Dauphin, who was asleep under Madame de Tourzel's skirt, but who had sufficient presence of mind not to call out.

By this time it was midnight. The Count mounted the box again, whipped up his horses, and soon left the Tuileries behind him. He drove by the Boulevards to the Pont du Clichy, where the large coach was in readiness, and it was placed alongside his own vehicle so closely that the fugitives passed from one into the other without even touching the ground.

Fersen went back to his carriage for one second, seized the horses by the bridle, and pushed them violently to one side. One of them stumbled, the vehicle was overturned, and left by the wayside to point to an accident.

He then took his seat on the box of the coach as he shouted to his driver, "As quickly as you can," while he himself continually urged on the horses with a long whip.

So much time had been lost waiting for the Queen that they feared danger from approaching daylight.

In less than half an hour they reached Bondy, the first stage. Six horses had been ordered and stood in readiness. Fersen's coachman left the box, a fresh one cracked his whip, and the vehicle rolled on once again.

"Farewell, Baroness Korff!" shouted Fersen after the travellers. He watched the carriage until it disappeared, but his silent, ardent prayers accompanied the Royal Family, especially the Queen, whom he loved so deeply.

He was far from confident of success.

"My dear Father," he wrote on the 22nd from Mons, where he was stopping on his rapid journey from France, "I have just arrived here. The King and his family left Paris safely at midnight of the 20th. I accompanied them on the first stage. God grant that the rest of their journey will be as successful. . . . I shall continue my own journey along the frontier in order to meet the King at Montmédy, if he is fortunate enough to reach it."

CHAPTER XXX.

Arrival in Varennes—Recognition and Capture of the Royal Family.

THE coach rolled on unheeded, and Nature herself seemed propitious to the travellers. It was summer in all its glory; the sky was clear, and flowers and verdure were refreshing to the eye. The light of dawning day streamed into the carriage, and the King repeatedly put out his head to drink in full draughts of the balmy air. People and country all seemed to breathe of peace and friendship.

On arriving at Claye—the next stage—the Queen found her waiting-maids, who had preceded her, and the two vehicles now followed one after the other.

The occupants of the royal coach were as follows:—

Madame de Tourzel travelled under the name of Baroness Korff; Marie Thérèse and Charles Louis represented her daughters, and bore for the occasion the names of Amalie and Aglaia; Marie Antoinette was Madame Rochet, the children's gouvernante, and the Princess Elisabeth a companion, called Rosalie; Louis XVI. was a valet, under the name of Durand.

The Queen wore a brown dress and a black hat trimmed with broad lace, which hid the upper part of her face.

Three of the royal body-guard followed the family. Maldent, dressed as a lacquey, who in the passport was named Saint-Jean, and sometimes sat in the rumble, sometimes followed the coach on horseback; Moustier, disguised in the same way, was called Melchior, and sat on the box with Valory, who represented the courier, and was called Franz.

The villages seemed to be waking up, and life to be brightening the prospect.

The King continually put his head out of the coach window

and watched the labourers as they went to their work, thankful to have something besides swords and lances to attract his eye.

The children, who had slept through the night, woke towards mid-day, and enjoyed the meal that had been prepared for them; while the Queen rested after the excitement, and reflected on the terrible events of the last few years.

"I think," she said, "that if we are to be arrested we should have been overtaken before now."

She was not at all depressed; in fact, she had seldom been in better spirits than in this minute, when their flight seemed likely to prove successful.

They had left Paris, which they feared; the King joked in his coarse way, and wondered what they were doing in his capital at that very moment.

But life delights in disappointing our hopes, as well as our fears, in cheating our foresight on the smallest provocation; for events rarely occur just as we expect them.

The drivers were encouraged by the promise of liberal pay; but the consequence of this generosity was not rapid progress only, it excited curiosity, which led to danger of detection, and in one village the travellers were recognized by a peasant.

"That is the King," he said to one of the Life Guards seated at the back, who denied it.

"I am positive that is the King and the Queen too," persisted the man; "I saw them over and over again in Versailles."

This speech ought to have convinced the royal pair of the necessity for the strictest precaution in the future.

On the contrary, Louis persisted in alighting continually and following the coach on foot up all the hills. He talked to the peasants, and while the horses were being changed he repeatedly mixed with the people, who crowded round to examine this magnificent and curious equipage, which came to pieces in Montmirail, where the servants had to alight while it was being repaired. This circumstance, in addition to the King's obstinacy in insisting upon walking at intervals, caused a delay of four or five hours.

The day passed slowly and sadly as the weary party continued their silent journey.

The clock struck four in the afternoon as they approached Châlons, and again the King insisted on alighting, to be again recognized.

One of the town councillors was standing by, and had not the slightest doubt that this was the Royal Family escaped from Paris; but he was full of compassion, and had not the least intention of betraying them. On the contrary, he tried to avert the curious attention of the crowd, helped to put the horses to, and urged the driver to be quick. A labourer went up to him and whispered:—

"That is the King. I know him."

The councillor said "No," but the man repeated his assertion aloud, and insisted that he was right.

"You *are* right; it is the King," the other replied at length, "but if any misfortune happens to him the responsibility will rest upon you."

The labourer went his way without revealing his secret to the crowd, while the coach disappeared in a cloud of dust in the direction of Pont de Sommevesle; where, according to arrangement, the first detachment of Bouillé's troops was to meet the travellers. The King and Queen had looked upon this place almost as a "city of refuge."

The General had not failed to send some fifty hussars, under the command of the Duc de Choiseul, accompanied by Baron Goguelat, who had been initiated into all the plans for the royal flight.

The soldiers had arrived early in the morning, and the travellers were expected about mid-day. Choiseul kept a constant look-out towards Châlons as time went on—two, three, four o'clock—but still no courier, no royal coach was to be seen on the horizon.

Under any circumstances the presence of fifty soldiers would have excited attention in such a small place, but there were reasons which made it still more conspicuous at this juncture. The village had refused to pay a certain tax, and as the authorities had threatened to use force to ensure obedience, the inhabitants naturally concluded that these hussars had been summoned for the purpose.

They called a meeting, and the church bells were rung for the neighbouring hamlets to come to their assistance, while curiosity mingled with fear, and the little armed troop was surrounded by the villagers.

The commander's position was a difficult one, and it was in vain that he assured them they had been sent to guard some valuable goods that were on their way, for nobody believed him; and the soldiers, who were alternately flattered and mocked by the people, became impatient at this useless delay, while Choiseul began to be afraid lest his troops should make common cause with the mob, and thus hinder, rather than further, the flight of the King.

It was now five o'clock. The plan must have failed, and Choiseul began to think that longer delay would only entail still greater dangers. His views were shared by Goguelat, and they resolved to retreat from the little village in the direction of Clermont, avoiding St. Menehould, where the inhabitants had also become alarmed on account of the unwonted presence of soldiers.

No sooner had the troops disappeared than the crowd dispersed, and Pont de Sommevesle resumed its sleepy quiet.

An hour later the King drove through without any difficulty, thanks to his passport. But he had been confident that he would find faithful and devoted friends, and became painfully anxious as he did not meet Choiseul, nor see a trace of his royal troops either here or in St. Menehould.

There were certainly thirty dragoons under the command of d'Andois, who had found the people nervous and excited, and in order to avert attention from the coach, the leader had thought it wise to allow his men to disperse about the town.

D'Andois approached, and without being observed by the others, managed to whisper to Madame de Tourzel:—

"There are unforeseen difficulties in the way and I must go, or I shall arouse suspicion."

But suspicion had been already aroused. Drouet, the son of the village postmaster, had been sitting drinking with some companions in a neighbouring inn, when he observed from the window the approach of the colossal coach. He immediately

left his friends, and from that moment never lost sight of the travellers.

Under pretence of examining the fresh relay of horses he looked at the ladies, and as he had served his time as a conscript in Versailles he had had frequent opportunities of seeing the Queen, and felt convinced that he recognized her here. Then he compared the so-called valet with the likeness of the King on a coin he held in his hand, which put an end to the slightest doubt.

He at once communicated the discovery he had made to a member of the council, who entrusted him with the task of pursuing the fugitives and arresting their progress if possible.

D'Andois had intended to accompany the King with his dragoons, but the National Guard in St. Menehould, who had heard the rumour that the travellers resembled the Royal Family, and who moreover were greatly excited, opposed their marching, and even arrested them.

One of the number, an ardent monarchist, managed to escape by climbing over the prison wall and then mixing with the crowd, where he heard of the hasty ride of the postmaster's son in the direction of Varennes, found his own horse, and hastened after him.

He saw Drouet far off in the distance and a companion with him, and though he did not know their errand, he feared that they were enemies to the King.

Drouet, who repeatedly looked back, discovered that he was being pursued, and urged on his horse to double speed.

The dragoon levelled his pistol, but lowered it again. Fate had decreed that the King's flight should be checked; and though he suspected that an enemy was ahead of him, he *might* be mistaken, and even run the risk of killing his Sovereign's friend.

Drouet knew every road and lane in the neighbourhood, but the presence of the rider behind made him uneasy. He tried to avoid him, and at a turning in a wood he suddenly disappeared from the sight of his pursuer.

The town of Varennes is divided into two parts, separated by a river, over which is a bridge, and at the end in those days

there rose a tower that rested on a dark, gloomy archway, through which all carriages had to be driven very slowly, and which was so narrow that it was easily obstructed.

Young Bouillé, the General's son, had arrived in Varennes with a detachment of troops, and was waiting on the other side of the bridge. Varennes was not a halting place, though he had brought some horses with him for the use of the Royal Family, and had put them in a stable near the entrance to the town, but unfortunately he had omitted to let the King know that they would be there.

The ill-luck which had followed the fugitives in other towns was repeated here, and as the delay of the coach made young Bouillé think that the King was not on the road, he allowed his troops to go to their night quarters. Some of them slept, some drank in taverns, while he himself sought a place of rest.

Horses had been changed in Clermont. Night came on, and the country through which the travellers were driving was gloomy and desert.

They approached Varennes towards midnight, but stopped at the entrance to the town. All was still, and the inhabitants seemed to be fast asleep. Neither horses nor soldiers were to be seen, and the travellers became uneasy.

Marie Antoinette alighted. She knocked at several doors and questioned the few people whom she saw on the road, but not one of them could give her the least information.

She and the King wandered about the deserted streets for nearly an hour. The horses were tired out, the coachman became impatient, and finally threatened to take one of the team and ride home.

By dint of entreaties and promises he was persuaded to remain, and it was resolved to continue their journey in the hope of finding the longed-for Bouillé on the other side of the bridge.

The heavy vehicle rolled through the streets and approached the archway, when it was suddenly brought to a standstill by a cart which had been overturned and left there on purpose to block the entrance.

Shadows flitted about in the dim light, grumbling noises reached the ears of the occupants of the coach, above which was distinctly heard the voice of a man. It was Drouet, who had arrived long before the Royal Family and had had time to communicate with the Procureur of the town, Sauce, who took him and others to hinder the flight. They seized the horses, and shouted that if an attempt was made to advance one step forward they would fire.

The guards on the box wished to show fight, in spite of such unequal numbers, but the King forbade them.

"Who are you?" said a voice. "Where are you going?"

"I am Baroness Korff," answered the Queen, who took over the character of Madame de Tourzel. "I am travelling to Frankfort with my family."

Sauce then came forward and asked to see the travellers' passport, which the King handed to him, after having enquired his name and position. He read it by the light of a lantern and found it correct. Then, hat in hand, with extreme politeness he represented to the *soi-disant* Russian lady that the night was dark, that the roads were bad and unsafe, and that the horses were far too tired to be driven any further. He added that Baroness Korff must be exhausted, and that he should esteem it an honour to detain her and her companions as his guests until the following day.

The Queen replied that she was anxious to continue her journey at once.

But Postmaster Drouet had no intention of letting his prey escape. The church bells had been set ringing, lights were seen in all the windows, and groups of men had begun to assemble in the streets. However reluctantly, the travellers had to submit and alight, while the coach was taken back to that part of the town from which they had come.

They had suffered shipwreck within sight of land; they were made prisoners hardly sixteen miles from the goal of their flight.

Marie Antoinette's nervous agitation betrayed itself in twitchings as, pale with emotion, she walked up the steps into the house of the Procureur. How earnestly she had trusted that she and her family might enjoy the blessings of liberty, and now her hopes

were dashed to the ground in the very moment when she thought that freedom was at hand.

She was led into a low, smoky room, furnished with a few poor chairs and a table covered with papers. Here she loosened the strings of her hat with trembling fingers as she looked round the miserable apartment.

She called her children to her side, and as they looked at her they saw that every vestige of a smile had vanished from her face; they even heard that her voice had quite a different sound, it had become so strangely dull and toneless. Sauce had left them with the excuse that he must pacify the crowd. He seemed to be good-natured; the King trusted him, and fancied that the people were more surprised than hostile. Then he argued, even if the townspeople should hinder his further journey, Bouillé must certainly arrive soon, and he would know how to deal with them.

The news soon spread that a coach had been stopped and the occupants taken to Sauce's house, and in the course of the night crowds of armed peasants arrived from all the districts in the neighbourhood of Varennes. The alarm bell continued to ring from the tower, and drums were beaten through the usually silent streets, while bands of excited people congregated before the doors of the Procureur's house. Sauce went in to the royal pair and said to Louis, at the instance of the people, that he was pleased to see the King and his family under his roof, adding that the council were deliberating as to how far they were justified in allowing them to continue their flight.

After a second's hesitation Louis declared that they were mistaken, that he was a simple citizen who was anxious to go on his way as quickly as possible.

Again urged on by the people Sauce changed his tone, and violently reproached the King for attempting to leave his subjects and make common cause with the enemies of his country.

The King stammered, continued to deny his identity, and appeared to understand nothing about the whole affair.

Sauce became more and more excited.

The Queen had been standing by without uttering a word. But this bandying of words between a subject and a King who would not confess his rank drove an angry blush into her cheeks.

"If you recognize your King, pay him the respect that is his due," she cried sharply, while her voice quivered with tears and agitation.

Sauce was silenced. Marie Antoinette's flashing look had suddenly cut short his flow of words.

Several persons entered the room, and Louis regained his composure as he said, "Yes, I *am* your King, and there are the Queen and the Royal Family. Surrounded by bayonets and swords in the midst of my capital, I have come to seek the peace and liberty which you all enjoy here in the bosom of my faithful subjects. My family and I cannot live in Paris without dying there. I am therefore come to dwell among you, my children, whom I will never forsake."

He spoke of the sorrows, troubles, and disorders which had driven him away, and of his wish to reach Montmédy, where, far from the turmoil of the capital, a constitution could be framed which would combine the interests of the people with those of the royal house. He added that he had at heart the true weal of the nation, and was firmly resolved to strengthen the cause of liberty.

The King was filled with emotion, and had spoken with a fervour to which he was usually a stranger. Overcome by his feelings, he embraced Sauce and besought him to save his wife and children. For a moment it seemed as if compassion would melt the hearts of the bystanders.

The aged grandmother of Sauce entered the room, and begged to be allowed to kiss the hands of the royal children. The Queen was almost choked with emotion when the old woman knelt at her feet and implored the blessing of heaven upon her children as the tears streamed down her face.

"You are a mother, madame," Marie Antoinette said to Sauce's wife, "put yourself in my place. One word spoken by you can restore us to liberty."

"Your Majesty," replied the woman harshly, as she strove to control her feelings, "I certainly love my King, but I also love my husband, and it is of him that I must think first; he will be held responsible for all that is occurring."

Hour after hour of this miserable, endless night dragged on.

The Dauphin had been put fully dressed on to an unmade bed, where he was fast asleep, while the Princess Elisabeth, Marie Thérèse, and Madame de Tourzel sought rest on some bales of goods in a corner of the room. The King paced the floor with his rolling heavy gait, and mumbled continuously to the Queen and his sister that he hoped Bouillé would soon be there.

Day dawned, but no help was at hand.

The popular excitement increased, and the crowd demanded to see the King and Queen. Louis went to the window. Most of the townspeople had never seen him before, and now his clothes were in disorder, his face pale and flabby, and his eyes red for want of sleep.

The Queen also came forward to the open window. The expression of her countenance was that of the deepest melancholy, and many of the crowd were evidently ready to give her their sympathy. Some shed tears and then controlled themselves, while others uttered threats and cursed this attempt at flight.

Curiosity once satisfied soon wearies, and now that they had seen the King and Queen the angry yell was again heard:—

"Go back to Paris!"

The movement and excitement in the streets increased as Choiseul and Goguelat dashed into the town with fifty hussars, and d'Andois, who had escaped from St. Menehould, following closely on their heels with his handful of men.

The two former made their way to the King, and represented to him the difficulties of continuing their journey in the cumbrous "berline," as he spoke of the attitude of the people and the indifference of the troops; but they said, at the same time, that with promptness and energy it might still be possible to proceed.

They then turned to the Queen and proposed that they should dismount seven hussars, and then force their way through the crowd on their horses.

Marie Antoinette's eyes shone as she said:—

"Speak to the King; it is he who must command, my duty is to obey him."

"Sire, we are waiting for your orders," said Choiseul to the King.

But to ask such a vacillating man as Louis XVI. for orders was simply equivalent to reducing him to despair between his wishes and his fears.

"Who can guarantee that a bullet will not strike the Queen, my sister, or my children?" he asked.

They decided to wait, and in the meantime the inhabitants took counsel, with the result that a deputation returned and read aloud a notice that they opposed the King's further journey, adding, moreover, that they had sent a messenger to Paris to ascertain the wishes and orders of the National Assembly.

Goguelat was the only man who retained his self-possession in the confusion. The position was becoming more perilous each moment, and turning to the Queen he entreated her to persuade her husband to decide at once. But even she was beginning to lose heart.

"*I* will not undertake any responsibility," she replied again. "It is the King alone who must decide on the steps to be taken."

In despair Goguelat rushed into the street and appealed to the honour and kindly feeling of his soldiers as he urged them to force a passage for the King and his family.

But their reply was, "Long live the people!"

He again used every argument with increased fervour of persuasion, only to be met with perfect indifference. Then a bullet suddenly struck his shoulder, he fell from his horse on to the paving stones, where he lay bleeding from the head till he managed to rise and return to the Royal Family, after some hasty bandaging. Daylight only brought fresh care and anxiety to the prisoners in the miserable room at the grocer's of the little town.

"To Paris! To Paris!" the mob continued to shout under the window. "We will pull them by the legs if they refuse to go willingly."

Young Bouillé had in vain tried to collect his men when he was roused by the alarm-bell; then he hastened off to the fortress of Dun, commanded by Deslon, who instantly put himself at the head of his regiment and rode to Varennes to find the town barricaded, and he alone allowed to enter.

He told the King that Bouillé could not possibly be far away, and begged him to come to a decision.

"I am a prisoner, I cannot command," answered the King wearily.

Deslon then turned to the Queen and addressed a few words to her in German. But the people shrieked:—

"We will have no German here."

Increased noise on the stairs announced some fresh arrival, and it was hoped that it was General Bouillé. But all hope of help vanished as the messenger, who had been sent from Paris to conduct the King back to the capital, appeared at the door. Lafayette's adjutant, Romoeuf, was the bearer of the written instructions. He had always been faithful to the royal house, and was dismayed when this task was assigned to him. In Clermont he had met Bayon, an officer in the National Guard, who, three hours previously, had received similar orders from Bailly. They were on the same errand, and continued their further journey together.

Bayon was the first to enter the room where the King was, and, heedless of his own disordered clothes and hair, in the deepest agitation he rushed up to him, all out of breath, exclaiming:—

"Sire, you know—perhaps—that they are killing each other in Paris—our wives, our children will be murdered—you must not go further. Sire, the interests of the State—yes, sire—our wives, our children——"

Here the Queen took him excitedly by the hand and pointed to the Dauphin, who was still lying fast asleep on the untidy bed.

"Am I not also a mother?" she said.

"What do you really want?" asked the King.

"Sire, an order from the National Assembly——"

"Where is it?"

"My comrade has it."

As he spoke he opened the door leading into the adjoining room, where Romoeuf was standing by the window with tears rolling down his face.

He approached with the paper in his hand and his eyes fixed on the ground. The Queen recognized him with astonishment as a man in whom she had had confidence, and his presence here robbed her of the last ray of hope.

"You here, Romoeuf!" she exclaimed bitterly. "Is this the means you have chosen to make your name renowned?"

Romoeuf looked at her with a pained and reproachful expression. He had ardently hoped that he would arrive too late.

"There is no longer a King in France," said Louis as he finished reading the instructions which the adjutant had handed to him.

Marie Antoinette seized the paper and read it.

"The insolent creatures," she said as she let it drop from her hands on to the bed where the royal child was sleeping.

Adversity had not yet taught the fallen Queen the difficult art of self-control.

"It shall not soil my child's bed!" she screamed.

Choiseul hastened to remove it, while Romoeuf tried to calm her; but she only loaded him with reproaches for allowing himself to undertake such a disgraceful errand.

The Queen's behaviour caused great indignation among the townspeople present, whose angry comments were heard in the streets below, and it soon became reported throughout the little town that the Queen had made light of the National Assembly and torn up their decree.

The King took Bayon aside and endeavoured to arouse his compassion, but the messenger of Bailly had no ear for Louis, and, deeply penetrated with the importance and dignity of his office, only hastened forward the preparations for their departure.

Drouet too would allow of no further delay, and even Sauce was eager to see the King on the road to Paris.

Romoeuf was the only one who counselled waiting, but he was powerless in the presence of the others.

One of the ladies feigned illness, and in order to retard the fatal moment threw herself on the floor, and declared that it was impossible for her to travel. The Queen insisted on remaining to attend to her, urging that she could not be so heartless as to desert a friend who had exposed herself to such perils by accompanying her.

The Queen herself was really seized with a convulsive fit, she shook in every limb, and seemed incapable of walking.

But all was in vain, and the poor children had to be roused.

Little Aglaia, who again resumed the appearance of Charles

Louis of Bourbon, became the object of special attention. Some were enchanted by his beauty. Others plied him with questions about the departure from the Tuileries, to which the child could not reply, but continued looking at his mother, to try and read on her face what it all meant.

"Charles," whispered his sister quite softly to him, "you are mistaken, we are not acting a play."

"I felt sure of that long ago," he replied in a low voice.

Incited by Drouet, Bayon and some of the town councillors shrieked out to the people with angry vehemence that the Royal Family should start that minute, while some of the most violent strove to force an entrance into the house and drag away Louis and Marie Antoinette by sheer force. The King again showed himself at the window, but his appearance did not calm the mob.

Tears were streaming down the face of the Queen as she emerged from the door of the house, holding the Dauphin by the hand and followed by Choiseul, to enter the coach and return to Paris in the glaring, burning heat of that summer's day.

Hardly half an hour later a distant cloud of dust foretold the near approach of Bouillé's troops towards Varennes. They had been roused, and hurried off, the moment the General had received the news of the King's capture.

His men shouted, "Long live the King!" and in order to maintain their enthusiasm considerable sums were distributed among them by their leader, who urged them to their utmost speed. But he neared the town only to learn that the King had left.

His first thought was to storm the barricades, force his way through the town, sabre the National Guards, and so rescue Louis XVI. His troops were ready to second him, but the horses were exhausted with the rapid ride; and besides, he must have overpowered the inhabitants before he could pass through their town.

He heard too that the garrisons from Metz and Verdun had gone over to the people. Thus all hope vanished, and Bouillé understood that the King had no further need of his energy or courage. In silence he led his regiment back to Stenay, and then, accompanied by a few of his officers, he hastened to Luxembourg and passed beyond the frontier.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Opinions in the Capital—The Return Journey.

THE people of Paris had long suspected that the King was planning to flee from the capital; they had ceased to love him, and felt that his presence among them was neither useful nor necessary. But they were well aware that if he escaped to a frontier town or to a foreign country he would not fail to become the ally of the enemies of France and of the Revolution, whom he would strengthen in a manner that would be harmful to his people.

They could not bear to let him go, and trembled when they heard that he had outwitted his guards. The general uneasiness increased as time went on, and at last simple citizens volunteered to act as spies and watchmen.

Camille Desmoulins relates a circumstance connected with the flight of the Royal Family. He says that a wig-maker, having heard that the King meant to escape, ran quickly to his neighbour the baker, and that they two hastened to arouse all in their vicinity, some thirty tradesmen, who proceeded in a body to the house of Lafayette and told him that the King was arranging to leave the city, beseeching him to adopt means to oppose his departure.

The General merely laughed at them, and advised them to go home.

The Dauphin's physician was the first to discover that little Charles Louis was not in bed when he entered the royal apartments on the morning of June 21st.

About the same moment—seven o'clock—the King's valet went to Louis' bedroom as usual, and not hearing a sound he drew aside the bed curtains to find that the monarch was not

there. He looked for him in vain in the adjoining rooms, while the maids were hastening to Marie Antoinette's apartments to find her bed in disorder, but no Queen. Then they went on to the rooms occupied by the Princess Elisabeth and little Marie Thérèse, but they were all empty.

The women's screams of astonishment were heard all over the palace, and there was no longer room for doubt—the Royal Family had fled.

The news spread to the Town Council, who instantly ordered three cannon to be fired, on hearing which the citizens rushed to the Tuileries to see what was the matter.

General Lafayette was the first to arrive, accompanied by an angry crowd, who seemed disposed to accuse him of connivance in the flight.

The excitement increased every moment, as people eagerly asked each other how Louis had managed to get away; and the most absurd suggestions flew from one to the other.

"He escaped by a ditch that runs under the 'Pavilion de Flore,'" cried some, "and Bouillé has taken him to Metz."

When the first feelings of surprise had subsided some became angry, others afraid, while a few looked on the occurrence from a ludicrous point of view, and laughed at the notion that their King had fled. A citizen posted the following notice on the walls of the palace:—

"This is to make known that a big pig has escaped from the Tuileries. The finder is requested to bring it back to its sty, where he will be amply rewarded."

The Royalists were delighted at the apparent escape of Louis, while the Liberal Party declared that it would certainly be frustrated by the Republic. Considerable uneasiness prevailed in the National Assembly, though it was disguised under assumed indifference, and those who were terrified one minute laughed at their own anxiety the next.

The populace rushed into the palace, and somebody scrawled under the portrait of the King hanging in the hall:—

"This house to let."

They laid violent hands on every emblem of royalty, and seemed literally beset with a spirit of destruction. The Bourbon

lilies and coats of arms were broken in pieces, while women of ill fame fought for the throne itself. They ransacked the Queen's wardrobe, and threw about the clothes they found in her room.

A market-woman sat on her bed and sold cherries.

Every picture of the Royal Family to be found in the shops was seized and burnt.

The fatal "berline" was reported to be a veritable Noah's Ark, with bed and dressing-rooms and every comfort, including a large store of wine and provisions.

The news that the King had been arrested, and was being brought back, was received with uproarious delight, and his arrival was expected with eager impatience. The people longed to see this weak and hypocritical monarch, who had promised to remain, and yet had been coward enough to flee; they were mad with the desire to jeer at him, to make him suffer.

The cumbrous coach, which had jolted heavily along towards the frontier, was driven yet more slowly back, as the coachman was forbidden to outstrip the National Guard, who were acting as an escort.

It was in truth a *via dolorosa* for the unhappy couple. The heat was stifling, and it was almost impossible to breathe.

Men, women, children, artisans, beggars, peasants, and tramps armed with brooms, pitchforks, and hatchets crowded up to the coach doors, jostling each other to get near; they hung on to the steps, insulted the guards, who still occupied their seats on the box, poisoning the sultry air with their fetid breath and foul tobacco as they shouted their obscene epithets in at the windows of the coach.

Marie Antoinette took her son on to her lap, covered him with kisses, and tried to lull him to sleep, controlling herself to amuse him with some of the pretty stories he liked her to tell him.

The Dauphin's caresses and Marie Thérèse's loving words prevented the Queen from observing all the coarse insults on the way. The children could not understand the rough behaviour of the people whom they had been trained to love; and at last, exhausted with emotion and the stifling heat, the poor little Dauphin became sick and feverish.

A terrible scene occurred between St. Menehould and Châlons. As they were driving past a château the owner, an old count, wished to pay his respects to the royal couple.

He was allowed to approach, but hardly had he gone a hundred yards from the coach before he was shot down like a dog. The mob seized his body, cut off the head, and carried it in triumph by the side of the coach.

"What is the matter?" asked the Queen, frightened by the noise.

"Nothing," was the reply. "We have only killed a madman." The murderer then appeared at the coach door with the head in his reeking hands.

They reached Châlons about eleven o'clock at night. The inhabitants were loyal, and their reception was in marked contrast to that which they had met with in other places. They were received at the gates by the corporation, and conducted by a guard of honour to the Town Hall, which was decorated to welcome them.

Twenty-one years ago Marie Antoinette had spent a night in this same house, when she made her entrance into France as Dauphiness and future Queen. She passed again through the same triumphal arch that was erected for her then, and the inscription still recalled the day so very far away. There were a few who had been present at that first reception who met Marie Antoinette again with weeping eyes.

The inhabitants of most of the other towns were hostile, or simply indifferent.

The following afternoon, about four o'clock, the travellers reached Epernay, where they were received without even common courtesy, and the Mayor bitterly reproached the King. Louis replied in a voice choked with grief, as he again resented the insults and terrors to which he and his family had been exposed in Paris, and reiterated that it had not been his intention to quit France.

On leaving the coach Marie Antoinette could hardly force her way through the crowd, who cast dirt at her and tore her gown.

A young man named Cazottes had hastened to the town at the head of a band of peasants, and if he had not thus come to their

assistance the lives of the Royal Family would certainly have been in danger. He had heard a tramp say to his companion:—

"Put yourself in front of me, so that I can fire at the Queen without anyone seeing where the shot comes from."

Insulting shouts were still ringing in their ears, when the leader of the National Guard took the Dauphin in his arms, as he whispered to the Queen:—

"Pay no heed to these cries; God is watching over us all."

While the King was listening to speeches, and repeating his grounds for leaving, his wife was led into a room, where she fell, utterly exhausted, physically and mentally, and covered with dust, while a seamstress was summoned to mend her clothes.

The young girl was so overcome that the tears which streamed down her cheeks almost prevented her from sewing, and the poor Queen felt there were still some hearts not closed against her.

The coach was stopped near Dormans, where Pétion, Barnave, and Latour-Maubourg, three Commissioners from the Assembly, were awaiting them.

They had left Paris with very different feelings.

Latour-Maubourg advocated the cause of the King. Barnave had never had access to the Tuileries, and only knew Louis through his opposition to the claims of the people; he had no sympathy with the royal house, but no personal hatred against it.

Pétion, on the contrary, was inflamed with all an ardent Republican's aversion to Monarchy, and was utterly without compassion for the unfortunate position of the Royal Family.

Latour-Maubourg took his seat in the smaller carriage with Madame de Tourzel, hoping that personal intercourse with the King and Queen would awaken some kindly feeling in his colleagues, Barnave and Pétion.

The presence of the Commissioners was a great source of annoyance to the travellers, who looked upon this intrusion as a fresh insult.

Marie Antoinette drew her veil closely over her face, and leant back in the corner of the "berline" with cold contempt.

Barnave placed himself between the King and Queen. Pétion took a seat between the Princess Elisabeth and Marie Thérèse. The Dauphin sat on the lap of one or another.

Pétion stretched himself out at his ease, without heeding that he was inconveniencing the Princess Elisabeth, and seemed to be ignorant of the very simplest forms of politeness.

Barnave, on the contrary, showed the Royal Family as much consideration as circumstances would allow.

The King was at first silent, but then entered into conversation with his family, gradually including the Commissioners in his remarks. He questioned them about affairs in Paris, and spoke of the persecution which had rendered his flight necessary.

"This is a very sad journey for my children," he observed.

The Dauphin, who heard the remark, took his father's hand in his own little ones and kissed it.

"After the first few words had been exchanged," relates Pétion, "I noticed a simplicity and unaffectedness which attracted me. Not a trace of the etiquette of a court; nothing but kindness and homeliness. The Queen called the Princess Elisabeth 'my little sister.' The Princess replied in the same tone; she called the King 'brother.' The Queen amused the Dauphin on her knee, and although the young Princess was more reserved, she too played with her little brother. The King looked at them all with a contented, though preoccupied expression."

Pétion had frequently heard of the piety of the Princess Elisabeth, and yet he addressed her, again and again, in loose and wanton language.

At first she pretended not to understand, but when he became blasphemous she replied severely, and a discussion on religion arose between them.

A glass and a bottle of water were by Elisabeth's side. Pétion became thirsty, and without even the politeness usual among equals, he asked for the glass and allowed the Princess to fill it, without a word of thanks.

The Queen offered the two Commissioners some game, fruit and other refreshments, which they had in the coach.

"Madame," said Barnave, "we are bound to trouble Your Majesty by our political zeal, but certainly not by our bodily needs."

Pétion was less considerate; he ate of all that the Queen offered him, and threw the fruit peel and game bones out of

the window so clumsily that they grazed the cheek of the King.

The Dauphin's liveliness annoyed him; he pulled the child's hair, so that he began to cry.

"Give me my son," said Marie Antoinette, "he is unused to such treatment."

Barnave's interest in the Royal Family increased the more he saw of them, and especially his respect for the Queen. A priest who had approached the coach with an expression of deep respect for the prisoners would certainly have been killed before their eyes, if Barnave had not leant out of the window and shouted, "Frenchmen! Brave people! Will you become a nation of murderers?"

Fearing he would fall out of the window in his excitement, the Princess Elisabeth held him fast by the tail of his coat while he spoke to the crowd.

She, the Queen, and also the King were filled with gratitude for Barnave's interference, and felt a quiet esteem for him from that moment. They had heard him named as an ardent opponent, and he had proved himself a respectful protector. Marie Antoinette entered into conversation with him, listened with attention, and learnt to appreciate him.

Another occurrence increased her favourable impression of him. The three lifeguardsmen seated on the box were exposed to the insults of the mob, who spat in their faces, tried to drag them from their seats, and ill-treated them by every means in their power. The Queen trembled for their lives, and again Barnave proved their protector.

Late on the night of June 24th the travellers alighted at the palace of the Archbishop of Meaux.

Barnave followed the Queen into the prelate's garden, where they quietly continued the conversation they had begun in the coach.

Silence lay over the town. The night was fine, the sky studded with stars, and the moon was full.

It was under very different circumstances that the Queen had had the meeting with Mirabeau which we have already narrated. Barnave's counsel was to prove of no greater use to her than

that of the noble though popular leader. He was less strong than Mirabeau, and too unskilled to avert shipwreck in the storm that was raging. He did not flatter her, he only warned her as he spoke with gentleness and persuasion. He urged her to do away with double-dealing and all connection with the past, to join the constitutional party, and to support the cause of freedom.

The Queen listened to him with attention. "Alas!" said she, "how can I possibly regain the confidence and affection of the people? Everything has conspired against me, and I have lost them."

"Madame," answered Barnave, "if I, a simple citizen from a provincial town, utterly unknown, have been able to gain their love, how easy it must be for *you* to succeed."

"One thing is certain," said the Queen sobbing; "we have been cruelly deceived about public opinion in France."

The hope of saving her, which had inspired Mirabeau, became the ardent wish of Barnave after this memorable evening, and it was her composure in misfortune which won for her the tardy and respectful adherence of an opponent.

When Barnave left the Queen he vowed to himself that he would die faithful to the Royal Family, though a friend to liberty.

"I am fully convinced," he said to Marie Antoinette, "that I shall pay with my life-blood the compassion which I feel for Your Majesty, and the services which I shall be proud to have rendered you. The only reward I ask for is the permission to kiss your hand."

This meeting in the little town was the first of many between the Queen and Barnave at the Tuileries, and one of his most precious recollections at the foot of the scaffold.

As the royal party neared Paris it was evident that the hatred of the people had grown even more fierce and bitter, and their insulting shouts became louder and louder.

Marie Antoinette was sad and depressed as she clung closely to the Dauphin seated on her lap.

"Down with the hussy!" screamed the people. "She need not show us her child; we know well that it is none of the King's."

Louis heard the words and remained calm. The Dauphin was

terrified and screamed, while the Queen wept and pressed him closer to her.

The throng increased at each step as they neared the capital, where placards were posted announcing that "Whoever cheers the King will be flogged. Whoever insults him will be hanged."

The Boulevards were lined with a double row of soldiers, the National Guards to the front.

Lafayette had gone to meet the King at the head of his staff, and now rode in front to guard his entrance into the city.

During his absence the riff-raff had rushed into the Tuileries and taken possession of the terraces.

Most of them remained covered, but one man, a deputy, bowed, hat in hand, as a sign of deep respect. He was hooted, and told with shrieks of derision to put his hat on; but he threw it down among the throng and calmly remained standing bareheaded.

A thick cloud of dust smothering all those on foot, from time to time hid the royal party from the fiendish eyes of the mob.

The perspiration streamed down the face of the poor little Dauphin, who could hardly breathe in the stifling air of the coach.

His mother let down the window, hoping for compassion from the National Guards, as she cried:—

"See the condition of my poor children! They are suffocated."

Step by step they approached the Tuileries gardens. Women, children, and soldiers clung to the coach and jeered as they taunted the King and Queen with the failure of their flight.

But for the moment the wrath of the crowd was directed against the three lifeguardsmen who had accompanied the Royal Family. They were overwhelmed with abuse, while some even suggested flaying them alive, or binding them fast to the wheels of the coach as they rushed forward to drag them from their seats.

Thinking their last hour was come, the three men chivalrously jumped down into the thick of the throng, to spare the King and Queen the horrors of seeing them torn to pieces before their eyes.

"Monsieur Lafayette, save those men," shrieked the Queen, beside herself with terror; "they only obeyed our orders."

Some members of the Assembly courageously stepped forward, took the three men under their protection, and thus saved their lives.

Hue, the valet, managed to force a way through the crowd, and got to the coach in time to take the Dauphin in his arms and carry him into the palace. The child's eyes filled with tears when he caught sight of the faithful servant, in spite of whose efforts, however, he was seized by an officer of the National Guard, who carried him in and put him on a table in the council-room.

Profound silence reigned as the King alighted from the coach, but as soon as Marie Antoinette appeared she was greeted with words of scorn and insult.

A Liberal deputy, the Comte de Noailles—formerly a courtier—came forward and offered her his arm. Conquered, but not cowed, the daughter of Maria Theresa pushed him aside, and seized the arm of a deputy of the Right; with lofty brow but with despair at heart she again entered the palace, from which she had fled so full of hope but five days previously, now exhausted with fatigue and crushed with humiliations, disappointments, scorn, and anger.

She caught sight of herself in a mirror as she passed through a vestibule, and was startled by her sharp rigid features, never again, she thought, to be enlivened by the brightness of a smile.

Her clothes were torn and grey with dust and dirt, which even accentuated every line of her careworn face, and her hair, white from sorrow, was also thickly powdered with dust.

The five days since her departure seemed like a year.

The Royal Family were then led to a room adjoining Louis' study, which was left open to the gaze of the multitude.

A deputy from Bretagne went up to the King, and in a half good-natured, half superior manner, as though reproving a schoolboy, said:—

"Have you not done a stupid thing? That comes of having evil counsellors about you. You are a good man; you are popular. See what a disturbance you have caused!"

And the man began to weep.

A scene which followed was apparently more respectful, though

in reality quite as painful, at all events for the Queen, who did not share her husband's apathy.

General Lafayette came forward and said to the King:—

"Sire! You are aware of my devotion to you, but I have always striven to impress upon you that if you oppose the people I shall espouse their cause."

"That is true," replied Louis. "You have adhered to your principles. It is a party question. I have returned; and I will candidly tell you that until lately I thought I was surrounded by men who share your opinions, and whom you placed near me. I did not believe that France held the same views. But during this journey I have seen that I was mistaken, and that the multitude think as you do."

"Has Your Majesty any orders for me?" asked Lafayette.

"It seems to me," replied the King smiling, "that it is rather *I* who have to enquire about your orders, not *you* concerning mine."

The Queen did not view the situation in the same light as the King did. She looked upon Lafayette as a jailer, and she meant to force him to accept the keys of a little box of valuables which she had had with her in the coach.

When he refused the Queen threw them into his hat.

"Your Majesty must be good enough to take these keys back," said the General coldly. "I shall not touch them."

"Very well," said Marie Antoinette. "I can find somebody else who will prove less scrupulous."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Libels against the King and Queen—Madame Roland—Gustavus III. of Sweden—The Emperor Leopold—Feeling in Coblentz—Experiences of Count Fersen.

THIS journey to Varennes had taught France that a king is not indispensable, and tended to shorten the interval before the Republic was proclaimed.

Louis was deposed until further orders, while measures were at once taken to abolish the Monarchy.

It was at this juncture that we first hear of Manon Roland, who was destined to play such a great part in the French Revolution.

Filled with contempt for the higher classes, and confidence in her own superiority, ambitious, active, eloquent, and passionate, she soon became one of the female leaders of the day.

But the present march of events was far too slow to satisfy her burning hatred of Louis and Marie Antoinette.

"To replace the King on the throne," she wrote after his flight, "would be sheer stupidity, not to say an abomination. To declare him incapable would necessitate the appointment of a regent. To accuse him openly would undoubtedly be the best and the most righteous proceeding.

June 25th she wrote:—

"It seems to me that this kingly puppet ought to be put under restraint, and his wife publicly prosecuted."

July 1st she wrote again:—

"The King has sunk to the lowest depth of degradation; he has ruined himself by this foolish step. He has aroused universal contempt, and his initials, his likeness, and the royal coat of arms are everywhere effaced.

"He has no other name than 'Louis the false' and "the fat pig.' He is caricatured perpetually in every way that can excite derision, and it is impossible to look forward to seeing a man on the throne again for whom one entertains such thorough contempt."

The Royal Family had formerly been treated as prisoners, but they were guarded with tenfold more vigilance after their unfortunate flight.

The morning after his return from Varennes the little Dauphin exclaimed when he awoke:—

"I have had such a horrid dream. I thought I was shut in with a lot of wolves, tigers, and wild animals, and they all wanted to kill me."

There was no disguising the fact that not only the child, but the whole Royal Family had become completely unnerved since the disastrous termination to their efforts at flight.

The Parisians amused themselves by laughing and chatting under the palace windows, and caricatures were circulated representing the King in leading-strings, or sitting in a baby's carriage.

The Queen was depicted either as a venomous snake, or as a bat, with outstretched wings clutching the constitution; sometimes as a panther, a witch, a cat, an owl, a sphinx, a sow, or a peacock. Boxes were made that opened with a spring, revealing a figure with features resembling the Queen, and on the lid were the words:—

"Of all ills this is the worst."

One sketch showed her leading a litter of pigs back to the sty, another with her severed head covered with serpents, and sprinkled with the blood of the people.

The country was deluged with libellous writings about her life, and her most innocent actions were construed into shameful deeds.

The royalist party and all her thoughtful friends entreated her to retire into a convent; others again urged the King to divorce his wife and send her back to Austria.

The police force was considerably augmented, and the grounds of the Tuileries looked like a camp. A sentinel stood on every staircase in the palace, and nobody was allowed to enter without a written permit from Lafayette or the Mayor.

One day Louis determined to ascertain if he were really a prisoner.

He opened a door and stepped out.

The sentinel levelled his musket.

"Do you know me?" asked the King.

"Yes, Sire!" replied the soldier.

The King was obliged to beat a retreat.

It is said that Lafayette even sent some sweeps to the palace to find out if it was possible to escape by the chimneys.

Every corner was closely searched, and even the privacy of the Queen's apartments was not spared. Her bedroom was watched day and night by two guards, who had strict orders not to lose sight of her for a moment—she was *never* alone.

In the early days after her flight Marie Antoinette had to rise, dress and undress, before the eyes of her tormentors, and no representations or entreaties could alter the decision that they were to pass the night seated by the bedside.

But, either because Lafayette perceived the impropriety of this order, or because the repeated complaints of the Queen at last bore fruit, true it is that after a while this surveillance became a little less rigid.

The soldiers were ordered to retire while the Queen was dressing, though they kept the door leading into the bedroom open that they might know all that was going on.

One night the Queen lighted a candle and began to read.

The attention of the guard on duty was naturally roused.

He went into the bedroom, drew aside the curtain, and seated himself without ceremony on her bed.

"I see that you cannot sleep," he said. "Let us have a chat; that will be better than reading."

The Queen politely gave him to understand that she preferred to be left undisturbed.

The Royalists who had remained in the country had by this time lost all heart, and were deeply disappointed in the King. His faithful friends who had been unwilling to follow the hasty decision of the Comte d'Artois and emigrate, felt annoyed that Louis had not taken them into his confidence. They had not forsaken him; it was he who had done without them, and this

attempt at flight had severed the last tie that bound them to a land so filled with danger.

The bourgeois class, too, now began to follow the example of the priests and nobles, and emigrated. Offices were opened in Paris and in all the large provincial towns to facilitate their departure, and the excitement was so intense that men selfishly hurried away, regardless of wives, children, or property.

The friends of the constitution were seized with the same despondency as the Monarchists. They could not disguise from themselves that Louis had broken his vow to the people when he attempted to flee, and several members of the Assembly sent in their resignation. Three hundred deputies declared that for the future they would take no part in any discussion concerning the interests of the King or his family.

The Marquis de Bouillé, who had barely escaped with his life in that disastrous expedition, wrote a letter to the Assembly from Luxembourg, in which he took the entire responsibility of the King's flight upon himself alone, and threatened to return to France at the head of foreign troops.

The Assembly received the letter with peals of laughter, and scorned the menaces of a general whose plans had been frustrated by the son of a postmaster in a small provincial town.

Count Fersen had sworn to use his influence at foreign courts on behalf of the royal pair if their flight should prove a failure, and he had by no means forgotten his vow.

The aged Austrian Ambassador, Count Mercy-Argenteau, had left France soon after the outbreak of the Revolution, and had been living in Brussels for a couple of years. Fersen at once sought him out, but received no encouragement from the old friend of Maria Theresa.

He was an experienced politician. He knew the sovereigns of Europe, and had been able to watch many of the French emigrants, but he did not entertain much hope from either quarter.

"Mercy sees everything from a gloomy point of view," wrote Fersen in his diary.

But this Swedish knight of Marie Antoinette was not to be discouraged, and he worked hard for the deliverance of the royal pair.

"The confidence with which I have been honoured by the King and Queen of France," he wrote to his father, the 20th of August, "makes it a duty not to forsake them, but to continue to work in their interest as long as I can possibly serve them. The whole world would blame me if I were to act otherwise.

"I was the only person taken into their confidence, and I may yet be able to assist them by my knowledge of their position, and of their views with reference to the state of France. I should for ever reproach myself for having helped to bring about their present unhappy condition, if I did not use every means in my power to extricate them from it."

If we think of the position of Louis and Marie Antoinette, it seems almost incredible that they could be in communication with their friends in other lands, for the strict surveillance they had to endure was extended also to every person that went in or out of the Tuileries.

But the prisoner is always more cunning than his jailer.

Before parting from Fersen the Queen had cautiously agreed with him upon a cipher, so that if their letters should fall into the hands of the enemy the contents would still remain a secret.

But they had other means than this. It is easy to write more important things between the lines of an ordinary letter with colourless ink, which only becomes visible on being held over a fire.

The Queen wrote secretly to Fersen immediately after her return to the Tuileries:—

"Do not be uneasy about us. We are alive."

A few days later she wrote:—

"The leaders of the Assembly seem disposed to treat us with lenity. Communicate with my relations abroad."

The next day she sent a still warmer and more touching letter:—

"I am alive. . . . I have been very uneasy on your account and pity you, for I know you have suffered from our silence. Heaven grant that this letter will find you. Do not expose yourself to danger by writing to me, and do not let any pretext induce you to return here. It is known that you helped us to flee. All would be lost if you were to be seen. We are watched

day and night. . . . I am quite indifferent. . . . Do not be anxious; nothing will happen. The Assembly will treat us with consideration. Farewell. . . . I cannot write more to you. . . ."

The Queen was mistaken if she believed that she could hinder Fersen from writing to her. She was mistaken, too, if she dreamt that apparently insuperable difficulties would deter him from finding some means of seeing her again.

He would willingly have shed his heart's blood to save Marie Antoinette. It was his one and only thought. He replied at once to her first note, "I am well, and only live to serve you."

This correspondence was continued without interruption until the final fall of the Monarchy. The letters were sent by many different ways. Sometimes they were hidden in a box of sweets, sometimes in a packet of tea or chocolate; one was inserted in the lining of a cloak, and one was tied up with a revolutionary pamphlet.

The writers often bore strange, unknown names, and a number of Marie Antoinette's letters to Axel Fersen were addressed "Poste Restante" to Monsieur l'Abbé Beauverin. But their safest and most frequent means of intercourse was through Baron Goguelat, who was imprisoned for a time as an accomplice in the flight, but who was released after the adoption of the constitution.

Gustavus III. of Sweden was one of the monarchs of Europe who took the keenest interest in the fate of the French King. He had been told beforehand of Louis' plans for flight, and when the time drew near to carry them out he had gone to Spa, that he might be nearer to the political scene of action, as well as to the fugitives when they had reached the eagerly desired goal. Count Fersen joined him here, out of heart at the failure of the plan, but as full of zeal as ever for the accomplishment of the prisoners' deliverance.

He even contemplated putting himself at the head of a formidable crusade against France, and in a letter the 30th of June he assured Louis and Marie Antoinette of his lively sympathy, and of the help which he intended to bring them. He told them, too, that the sovereigns of Europe were ready to co-operate with him in his scheme, and called upon Louis to maintain his royal dignity at any cost.

Proud of the part which he believed himself called upon to play, he had no thought but for the welfare of France.

Gustavus counselled Louis to put himself in the place of Henri IV. or Charles VII., and to make the reconquest of his kingdom from the hands of the revolutionists the object of his life.

This advice showed that the Swedish King understood the character of the French nation better than that of their Sovereign; but to give force to his letters to Louis he wisely used his influence with the Queen at the same time.

"Your position is a perilous one," he wrote to her, "and it will require violent measures to extricate yourself from it. Whatever the danger to which you may expose yourself, it must certainly be less than to leave your fate to chance or to allow others to save the kingdom for you. But I forget that it is superfluous to speak of dangers, or to make light of them, to a queen who showed herself so undaunted in the presence of a raging mob, and who since then—if I may use the expression—has been 'fed' upon dangers."

Gustavus strove with more zeal than prudence to form a royal alliance with the object of invading France and rescuing the King.

He wrote to Catherine II. of Russia July 9th, and on the 16th to the King of Spain, unfolding his plan and begging for help. He wanted 30,000 Austrian soldiers to advance into France through Flanders, 12,000 Swiss to take possession of Franche Comté, and 20,000 Spaniards to enter the country from the Pyrenees.

He further hoped for assistance from Prussia and Hanover, and neutrality on the part of England.

Gustavus would place himself at the head of 16,000 Swedes, with 6-8000 Russians, whom he conjured the Empress Catherine to send as her contingent.

The united fleets of Sweden and Russia were to convey them to the French coast and land them at Ostend, while the emigrants would naturally ally themselves with the foreign troops. Then, as soon as her own princes had again set foot in France, the Swedish King was sure the highest and best in the land would not fail to join them.

It was the decided opinion of Gustavus and Fersen himself that the latter should proceed at once to Vienna to persuade Marie Antoinette's brother to advance upon France, in conjunction with the Swedish King, and fight on behalf of his sister and brother-in-law. Leopold received him heartily, and eagerly assured him of his interest in the Royal Family of France, and of his devotion to his unfortunate sister. But Fersen was quick to perceive that the Emperor's friendly words conveyed no assurance that he would render assistance.

We must, however, be just and recognize that although Leopold failed to realize all the hopes of Marie Antoinette and her partisans, he always entertained a lively interest in the affairs of France, and expressed the warmest wish to be of use to his relations.

He issued a proclamation from Padua, July 7th, calling on the majority of the European sovereigns to combine and rescue the King of France; but he expressly repudiated the idea of a counter-revolution. Leopold was in favour of arbitration, and wished to act in accordance with the new principles; besides, he was far from blind to the follies and inexperience of the emigrant party.

The news of the flight of the King and his family from Paris had caused wild joy among a certain section of the refugees, who made grand preparations in the hope that a messenger would soon announce the happy arrival of Louis on their side of the frontier. It would, however, be a fatal mistake to suppose that all the emigrants wished the wheel of fortune to turn in favour of Louis and Marie Antoinette. The stirring events that were taking place, and the increasing dangers threatening the position of the nobles, by no means contributed to unity in the royal cause.

By far the larger number of the refugees had long been displeased with the King. "Emigration is on the increase," wrote Marie Antoinette to her brother Leopold; "it is a misfortune. The nobles are bringing about our ruin by leaving us alone in this time of dangers. We must save ourselves." The little court over which the Comte d'Artois presided in Turin, and later on in Coblentz, represented to many people the real authority of the French kingdom. Coblentz was for a time Paris in Germany,

and the majority of the emigrants took no pains to hide their sentiments, in spite of the King reigning in their own land.

The captivity of the royal pair caused them no distress, while it gave them greater freedom of action, which they had the bad taste to boast of; while some even openly expressed their joy as they heard of the course of events.

The Comte de Provence had left Paris with his wife by another route the same day on which the King and his family had attempted to escape. He had arranged to go to Coblentz for a while, at all events, and was more fortunate than his royal brother, as he succeeded in joining the Comte d'Artois in safety, and was selfishly more pleased at his own success than distressed at the misfortunes of Louis.

Fersen explained to him the plans for the rescue of the King. The Prince placidly listened to all he had to say, but his answers were evasive, and he carefully concealed his own wishes and designs.

"You may be sure that in his heart he has far more personal ambition than devotion to either his brother or myself," Marie Antoinette wrote to the Princesse de Lamballe early in July, 1791. "It has been the sorrow of his life that he was not born to rule, and his craving to occupy the first place has increased during our troubles, which have given him the opportunity of coming forward more prominently."

The Comte d'Artois received Fersen with passionate irritability, talked of subduing the rebels by force, and violently opposed any attempt at arbitration.

Fersen describes him in the following words:—

"Artois chatters incessantly. Never listens to what others are saying, only speaks of coercion, never of conciliation, and seems confident of his own opinions in every detail."

The friend of Marie Antoinette saw other proofs of disloyalty to the King and Queen while in Coblentz, for in this rallying place for all emigrants he met the Polignac family, who, from their first foreign home in Italy, had gone to Germany as allies of the Duc d'Artois.

Fersen was indignant at the indifference of Madame de Polignac to the fate of her royal friend.

"Madame de Polignac," he wrote in his diary, "has not the least shadow of gratitude towards the Queen. She certainly wept when she saw me, but her emotion was of short duration, and she talked far more of herself and her own affairs than of her unhappy friend. She said a thousand things, and among them many that were not flattering to the Royal Family."

Fersen himself was not free from slander, but was accused of ambition by both the Swedish and Spanish Ambassadors.

"They are right, I was ambitious in my desire to serve you, and I shall grieve as long as I live that I was unable to attain my object," he wrote on this subject to Marie Antoinette. "I longed to repay a portion of my debt towards you, and to prove to the world that it *is* possible to be useful to others without any selfish motive.

"My course of action would, moreover, have convinced people that this was my sole ambition, and that the honour of your acquaintance, Madame, was my most cherished reward."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Princesse de Lamballe and her Diplomatic Mission—Letters from the Queen and the Princesses.

WHILE the Duchesse de Polignac was only thinking of herself and planning the security of her possessions, the noble, gentle Princesse de Lamballe was steadfast in her unselfish devotion to the Queen. She was one of the few to whom the royal pair had communicated their plan of flight.

In order to allay suspicion Marie Antoinette had arranged that the Princess should go to Aumale, where her father-in-law was detained on account of his bad health. If she, as intendante, was absent, it would be less easy to suspect that plans for flight were being formed. As soon as this was safely accomplished Marie Antoinette was to communicate with her friend, in order that she might travel as soon as possible to meet her King and Queen on foreign soil.

The Princess received the expected message at Aumale on the evening of June 21st, and left immediately for Boulogne, to take ship for England.

They weighed anchor, and in the very moment that the vessel reached the open sea the firing of cannon in the town announced that the flight of the King was known.

The channel was safely crossed, but news of the arrest of the Royal Family in Varennes had not yet been received in England.

When she heard the sad news her first impulse was to return to France; but in letters from the court she was urged to remain where she was for a time, as it was thought that her presence in England at this juncture might possibly prove more useful to the Royal Family.

It was hoped that the "mighty statesman," Pitt, would be

induced to support the tottering kingdom, and Marie Antoinette encouraged the Princesse de Lamballe to exercise all her influence to gain the favour of the English royal house. But her efforts proved fruitless, and the following extract from a letter of Marie Antoinette's to her sister, Marie Christine, emphasizes the fact:—

"There are moments in which I feel tempted to send my dear Lamballe to Leopold. She might see you on her way, and you could instruct her as to her diplomatic behaviour at court. She has just undertaken a perilous journey to England in all secrecy on my behalf. The Queen and her daughter received her favourably, but the King is helpless. It is his Minister who rules, and with scant courtesy, in very clear language, he has given the Princess to understand that we have brought our misfortunes upon ourselves."

Madame de Lamballe received one crushing announcement after another from France, and her prospects in England were hopeless. The echo of the disturbances in Paris reached London, and told her day by day of the renewed dangers to which her beloved Queen was exposed.

Her mission to this foreign land was soon concluded, and her letters became full of earnest entreaties to be allowed to return to France, while Marie Antoinette besought her in vain not to throw herself again into the tiger's jaws. But the greater the danger the greater was her determination to brave it.

The two friends repeated their arguments to each other again and again; the one to obtain permission to come, the other to urge at least delay in travelling.

"It was," as Lescure calls it, "a noble and touching strife between them; the one willing to make any sacrifice, the other unselfishly refusing it."

Marie Antoinette's letters to her friend in the second half of the year 1791 give an interesting insight into the feelings of the Queen; they betray her real wish to see her again, though she did not dare recall her.

One of these letters, dated August 30th, closes with the following words:—

"How happy was that time, dear heart, when we read together,

walked and chatted without being disturbed by the shouts of the mob."

"My dear Lamballe," the Queen wrote early in September, "you can form no conception of the state of my mind since your departure. Rest is the basis of life, and it pains me that I seek it in vain. During the last few days, when the new constitution has made the people uneasy, we hardly know what to expect. Terrible things are happening around us. . . . In the meantime we have done no good. Come back, dear heart, I long for your friendship. Elisabeth has just entered the room and begs to add a line. Farewell! farewell! I embrace you with all my heart.

"MARIE ANTOINETTE."

The King's sister wrote the following words at the foot of the letter:—

"The Queen has given me permission to tell you how deeply I love you. She does not look for you more eagerly than I do.

"ELISABETH MARIE."

Later on, in the same month, Marie Antoinette wrote:—

"The King has sent me his letter, dear heart, that I may continue it. Thanks to his strong constitution he is now quite well. The calm with which he contemplates our surroundings seems to come from Heaven, and our good Elisabeth considers it a divine inspiration. The indisposition which troubled him has hardly reached the ears of the people. . . .

"I do not deceive myself, my dear Lamballe, I leave all with God. Trust in my sincere friendship, and if you wish to give me a proof of *your* attachment, dear heart, take every care of your health, and do not think of returning until it is completely re-established. Farewell! I embrace you.

"MARIE ANTOINETTE."

Princess Elisabeth added:—

"Madame, you will never find a truer or more devoted friend than ELISABETH MARIE."

"Do not return," we read in a subsequent letter from the Queen, "as affairs now stand; your tender heart would grieve too bitterly for us. How good you are, and what a sincere friend you

are! I feel it deeply, I can assure you; and in the strength of my attachment to you I forbid you to return. Await the effect of the adoption of this new constitution. Farewell, my dear Lamballe, and believe that my love for you will only cease with my life."

The heart of the Princess spoke louder than the prohibition of the Queen, and at last she could no longer withstand the impulse to be present in the daily increasing danger to which the Royal Family was exposed, and in spite of her friend's repeated warnings she returned to France.

The Duc de Penthièvre was then lying ill at Vernon, and her first care was to go and nurse him. She informed Marie Antoinette of her intention by letter, and immediately afterwards she received the following reply:—

"No, dear Lamballe, no, you must not return. In the present condition of the Duc de Penthièvre you would be missed too terribly in Vernon. What a true and good friend you are! I assure you that nobody realizes it more keenly than I do. But one must think of one's self, and with the authority of friendship I forbid you to return. I repeat, wait the effect produced by the adoption of the new constitution. Let me hear from you frequently, and tell Monsieur de Penthièvre that the King and I look forward with sympathy to your accounts of his health. Farewell, dear Lamballe, and be convinced that my attachment to you will never cease. A thousand greetings!

"Marie Antoinette."

A few days later she wrote:—

"No, I repeat it, my dear Lamballe! Do not return just yet, my friendship for you will not allow it. I hoped that circumstances would be more favourable when the new constitution was accepted, but far from it. Stay with the Duc de Penthièvre, who so sorely needs your care. If it were not for his sake I could not possibly be so unselfish, for I feel my attachment to you increase day by day in the presence of these heavy troubles. God grant that time will restore to us the affection of our people; but wicked men are spreading such vile, slanderous reports about us, that I rely more on my own courage than on the course of events.

"Farewell, my dear Lamballe. Believe that absent or present I love you, and find support in your friendship.

"MARIE ANTOINETTE."

The Princess returned to Vernon October 14th, and on the 18th of the same month she arrived in Paris.

"My daughter-in-law's devotion to the Queen is particularly praiseworthy," said the old Duke; "she is making a great sacrifice by returning to her now, and I tremble lest she should suffer for her unselfishness."

The Princess herself was full of uneasiness, and made her will before setting out on her journey. She remembered the Queen in the following words:—

"I request the Queen as a last favour to accept my alarum-clock, which will recall to her the hours we spent together, to take it as a proof of gratitude from her, whom she has honoured with the title of friend, a precious title, which has given me the greatest happiness, and which I have never misused. It has been the seal of my deep feelings of devotion towards her whom I have always loved, and whom I shall cherish to my last breath."

"I am quite certain that Your Majesty wishes to have me," the Princess said, as she again entered the palace of the Tuileries.

The Queen cordially agreed with her friend, though filled with apprehension on her behalf. Blamed, forsaken, accused by nearly all who ought to have pitied, if they did not help her, it had been a great comfort to her in her trouble to possess the friendship of such an unselfish, devoted, fearless woman as the Princess.

Madame de Lamballe was once more installed in the Pavilion de Flore. She encouraged the royal pair by every means in her power, and among other things, at the request of the King, she wrote to many emigrants of good family to urge them to return to their country.

In the meantime events bore a threatening aspect in France, and the relations and friends of the Princess began to foresee the possibility of the awful fate which awaited her.

The King, the Queen, the Duc de Penthièvre, Princess Elisabeth, the Duchesse d'Orléans, and many others, advised her most

earnestly to leave the excited capital. Even the Pope used powerful persuasion to induce her to go to Rome. The Princess answered each one in the same strain:—

"I have nothing to reproach myself with. If my sacred duty, if my steadfast devotion to my royal rulers, who are also my kinsmen and friends, if the affection which I feel for my father-in-law and for France are crimes, well, then, I confess myself guilty before God and men, and I shall esteem myself happy to die for such a righteous cause."

The Duc de Penthièvre, who was extremely uneasy about his daughter-in-law, induced the King of Sardinia, the head of the family, to exert his powerful influence, and *command* her to flee from the dangers which surrounded her; he wished her to return to Italy, her native land. But even the King addressed her in vain.

"Sire, my exalted kinsman!" she wrote in her reply. "I cannot remember that any of our renowned forefathers of the house of Savoy ever dishonoured his name or clouded his reputation by a cowardly act. I should do so—and I should be the first of the race to sin thus—if I were to leave France at this terrible crisis. Will Your Majesty pardon me that I dare to reject your proposition? Ties of blood and policy equally call upon us to unite our efforts to defend the King, the Queen, and every member of the Royal Family in France. It is impossible for me to swerve from the resolution which I have taken—not to forsake them—especially at a time when they are deserted by all their old servants, myself excepted. In happier days Your Majesty may count on my obedience, but now, when the French court is exposed to the persecution of the most cruel enemies, I humbly crave the right to listen solely to the instincts of my own heart. During the most brilliant epoch of the reign of Marie Antoinette I enjoyed her royal favour and kindness, and to forsake her now in her misfortune, sire, would be to stain *my* memory with cowardice and faithlessness, as well as that of my honoured race. I fear this more than any conceivable anguish."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The King Ratifies the New Constitution—Festivities—The Queen's Last Visit to the Theatre—The Last Possibility of a Reconciliation between the Royal Pair and the Duc d'Orléans.

Louis XVI. was the mere shadow of his former self. He was no longer a king, he was hardly a man, for persistent opposition seemed to have sapped his strength, and he did nothing but stare with dull, expressionless eyes from morning to night. Broken in health and distressed in mind, he passed weeks at a time without uttering a single word, while Marie Antoinette contemplated her husband's supineness and dejection with shame and anger. He had not the power to take a decisive step, or even to carry out a plan that had been already agreed upon, and from this moment he placed himself entirely under the more energetic guidance of his wife.

It was long since Marie Antoinette had thought of coquetry, extravagance, dress, or luxury in any form, and it was impossible to recognize in her the cynosure of the "Galerie des Glaces," the crowned shepherdess of Trianon, the Queen of elegance, fashion, and pleasure.

Surrounded as she was by a thousand pitfalls, and equally hated by the emigrants and the Jacobins of Paris, her path was beset with persecution and sorrow. A cruel fate seemed to pursue her with such inexorable bitterness that she was sick at heart, tired even of hoping.

And yet she tried to hide her tears, and even to seek fresh sources for help. She stood like a trusty sentinel at her dangerous post, inspired solely by devotion to her husband and children. The crook of the shepherdess was exchanged for the pen, and serious political deliberations succeeded to the rural

pleasures of her little farm. But the lively style which had been the charm of her letters in happy days was dull and saddened now, when she saw herself face to face with danger on every side.

She possessed the courage of Maria Theresa, but not her mother's intellect, and as her education had totally unprepared her for diplomacy she was continually making mistakes. She clung tenaciously to the facts that the Monarchy was in danger, and that the safety of the whole land was threatened; but she did not grasp—at any rate, she did not own to herself—that in order to save the latter she must sacrifice the former.

By the advice of Barnave (July 30th, 1791) she wrote a letter to the Emperor Leopold, in which she emphasized the necessity of a representative Monarchy, and recognized the impossibility of a return to despotic rule. She urged upon her brother the danger and futility of foreign interference, which would only wound the feelings of the French nation, and be productive of disastrous results.

After she had taken Barnave into her confidence, Marie Antoinette thought she could see a possibility of union between the two parties.

It is more than probable that it was the woman, not the Queen, who fascinated Barnave, and induced him to risk his own safety in the service of the court. But whatever his feelings may have been, he was honest in his counsels and sincere in all the help he rendered to the Queen.

In the meantime important events were occurring. The new constitution was completed and submitted to the King by the Assembly, who appear to have allowed him a little more freedom in order that he might examine its accuracy.

The King and Queen consulted different men with reference to the question of a new constitution, and only a few of them seem to have entirely advised its rejection.

Prince Kaunitz, who made himself the interpreter of Leopold's opinions, counselled its acceptance. Others did the same, though clearly recognizing its defects.

Count la Marck commissioned Mirabeau's former secretary to draw up a report, which he submitted to the King, in which he urged that Louis ought to try and gain the confidence of the

nation by sanctioning the constitution, at all events until its inadequacy provoked a fresh revolution. The friends of the constitution—Lafayette, Barnave, the brothers Lameth, and others—naturally urged its adoption in the warmest terms.

It offended the sense of honour of both Louis and Marie Antoinette to submit to a government which they did not thoroughly understand, and, moreover, of which they disapproved.

And yet, on the other hand, to try and gain the confidence of the nation was the sole means of assuring the throne to themselves and their children. In order, therefore, to escape from their virtual imprisonment they resolved to yield to the force of circumstances.

"This is a very critical moment for us," Marie Antoinette wrote (September 12th, 1791) to Count Mercy; "the King has to sign the constitution to-morrow. I should like to delay my letter a couple of days, in order to send you the draft of his speech, and at the same time to acquaint you with the effect it has produced; but the bearer of this letter leaves on Wednesday. The King's declaration has been drawn up by the persons who wrote to you by Laborde.* You will find some traces of firmness in it, but certainly not the language suited to a King who realizes the insults to which he has been subjected. The die is cast. The only thing we have to do now is to accommodate our behaviour and actions to existing circumstances. I wish everybody would be guided by me, but even within our own walls we are beset with difficulties and exposed to contentions.

"Pity me. I assure you that it needs far more courage to maintain my position here than it does for a man on the battle-field; all the more that I feel convinced there is nothing but misfortune in store for us, mainly owing to the want of energy in some and the absence of goodwill in others. My God! Is it possible that I, who am born of high rank and who feel the noble blood that flows in my veins, can be doomed to live my life in such a century and among such beings! But do not

* "These persons are Messieurs Barnave, Dupont, Lameth, Lafayette. I have given my opinions respecting the ability, character, and system of the dangerous demagogues, and of their designs, about which there can be no doubt."—Note by Mercy.

think, all the same, that my courage is failing me. If not for myself, I will be brave for my child, and fulfil my long and painful task to the end. I can no longer see what I am writing. Farewell!

"P.S.—When you have received the King's speech, tell me in cipher what you think of it.

"MARIE ANTOINETTE."

The day after this letter was despatched, Louis sent the document in question to the Assembly, in which he sanctioned the constitution and promised to abide by it, believing that at last all would go well if he were patient and prudent.

He went to the Assembly on September 14th in order to take the oath of fidelity to the new constitution. He entered the hall at the head of his Ministers, took his seat by the side of the President, and repeated the words of the oath in a loud voice.

But Paris in 1791 was not the same as in 1789. Even after the fall of the Bastille the old *régime* still existed side by side with the new order, and the old French aristocracy had preserved their grandeur, if not their power, during the first year of the Revolution, before titles, coats of arms, and illustrious names had been abolished.

It was otherwise in 1791. The aristocracy and the Revolution no longer stood on an equal footing. Luxury and difference of rank had been abolished. All escutcheons had been broken up or effaced. Titles and ceremonies had been discarded, and court etiquette done away with.

The President of the Assembly had announced that the deputies had no need to rise when the King arrived. Louis noticed this want of respect and felt it keenly. Marie Antoinette, who, with the Princess Elisabeth and the children, had a seat on a platform, saw it too, and was not less exasperated; but the fact that the members remained covered while the King was taking the oath seemed to her the crowning point to the insults to which the King was being exposed in this trying hour.

The shouts of applause which greeted Louis as he left the Assembly were powerless to make him forget these indignities.

On his return to the palace he threw himself into a chair.

"Alas, dear wife!" he exclaimed to the Queen, "you have come to France to see——"

His voice was choked with tears. Marie Antoinette knelt at his feet, embraced him, and tried to comfort him.

A few days later the new constitution was solemnly proclaimed on the Champ de Mars. People crowded to hear, and all public officials hurried to the spot. They embraced and congratulated each other, and trusted that peace and order were permanently re-established.

This completion of the new order of things was again a ray of hope on the threatening horizon, though unfortunately one of short duration.

Some hoped that the Revolution was ended, but the wiser and more far-seeing did not share these sanguine views. In reality none laid down their arms, and demonstrations of joy could not deceive a watchful observer of the times.

Fêtes, illuminations, singing, and dancing were the order of the day. The bells were rung and crowds filled the palace gardens, noisily extolling the new constitution in the land, while the Royal Family was invited to share in the festivities of the city.

The King and Queen consented to be present, and Louis, Marie Antoinette, and the Dauphin drove through the streets of Paris, escorted by the National Guard. The Boulevards, the Louvre, and the Tuileries were brilliant with illuminations, and garlands were hung from tree to tree. Games and sports were provided for the people, who were regaled freely with food and wine.

The crowd was so dense that the royal carriage could only proceed at a walking pace.

The King and his family were on the whole received with enthusiasm.

But one man kept himself close to the carriage, and each time the shout of "Vive le roi" was heard he shrieked into the ear of the Queen:—

"No! That will not do. Vive la nation!"

Marie Antoinette prudently pretended not to hear the words.

It seemed to her that hatred was mingled even in the cheers, while she longed for the conclusion of the festivities.

On her return to the palace she stole away to her bedroom to seek relief in tears, in spite of the inquisitive looks of her jailers.

After these September fêtes the Royal Family enjoyed a brief respite from persecution, but the King and Queen were no less distrusted by the people than before.

The cafés were like battle-grounds, and the newspapers redoubled their violent attacks upon the Government.

The domestic arrangements in the palace were unaltered, and sentinels stood as before at every entrance and outside the doors of the royal apartments.

Every place, every word that was exchanged was still looked upon with suspicion, while every movement, each look between Louis and his wife, was noted and reported.

And yet it seemed as though, towards the close of 1791, popular opinion was beginning to turn a little in favour of the hated Queen.

In a document of the period which is published by Lescure,* we read:—

"The King is doing his utmost to regain the favour of the people. He is frequently to be seen walking in the city, especially in the suburbs; but it is easy to see that he is never as warmly greeted as the Queen was last night at the opera. For instance, the women shouted with enthusiasm a thousand times: 'Vive la reine!' then 'Vive la nation!' but very few shouted 'Vive le roi!'

"It is reported publicly that the Queen, who is decided in her views, has resolved to attach herself to the constitutionalists, who assure us of the Emperor's neutrality. The King, on the contrary, is said to long for a return to the old *régime*."

The Jacobins were afraid that kindlier feelings would be aroused in the people, and they again maliciously strove to represent every action of the Queen in the most repulsive light, which, of course, soon told on the transient goodwill of the crowd.

Still she was cheered once again, but for the last time, at the

* *Correspondence secrète sur la Cour et la Ville*, 1777 à 1791.

Italian opera, February 20th, 1792. A protest was made that evening against any sort of ovation. Disputes followed, and the adherents of the Royal Family had to put forth all their zeal to carry the day.

A comic opera of Grétry's was being played, in which the charming *prima donna*, Madame Dugazon, roused the enthusiasm of all present.

She was heart and soul a royalist, and intended that the public should see it for themselves that evening, for as she sang the words "Oh, how I love my Sovereign!" she bowed low, and turned to Marie Antoinette.

In an instant a score of voices roared from the pit:—

"No Sovereign, male or female! Liberty!"

A few answered from the boxes and the upper circles:—

"Long live the Queen! Long live the King! The King and the Queen for ever!"

Then was heard from the other camp:—

"No Sovereign! No Queen!"

The strife grew hotter and hotter. The spectators in the pit took sides, and at last came to blows. The Jacobins were outnumbered, and as at this time they were the only party who had discarded the use of powder, tufts of their dark hair were seen to be flying about the theatre.

A detachment of the guards arrived, and in the Faubourg St. Antoine, which had already heard of the occurrence, an attack upon the theatre was instantly planned.

The Queen maintained a calm and dignified demeanour throughout. The officers of the guard rallied round her, and as she left the opera-house she was again cheered with deafening shouts.

This was the last time in her life that she went to the play. She had wiped the tears from her eyes many times in the course of the evening, for even hearty cheering had made her sad; and the Dauphin, who was sitting on her lap, had asked her why she was crying.

* * * * * *

The conduct of the Duc d'Orléans after the flight of the Royal

Family, and the events that immediately succeeded, seemed well calculated to ensure forgetfulness of his previous hostile behaviour.

Nothing would have been easier than for him to lay claim to the throne. But, on the contrary, he continually repeated:—

"As long as the King is in France there can be no other ruler."

The 26th June he had renounced all rights to the throne, which the laws of inheritance in France entitled him to hold.

"It is no longer possible for me to step out of the bourgeois class," he wrote about that date. "I did not enter it without the firm resolution of remaining in it for ever, and ambition on my part would be unpardonably out of harmony with my principles."

Towards the close of this same year there was a fair prospect of a reconciliation between Louis XVI. and the Duc d'Orléans.

In the hope of paving the way to a better understanding, the King had made his cousin an admiral directly the new constitution had been established. The Duke went to the Minister of Marine, Bertrand de Molleville, to tender his thanks on his appointment. He assured the Minister in a frank, straightforward manner that he valued the favour shown him by the King very highly, because it gave him the means of letting His Majesty know how shamefully he had been maligned.

"I am very unhappy, and I do not deserve to be so," he said, "for I am innocent of a hundred things of which I have been accused. I have been considered guilty solely because I have scorned to justify myself concerning crimes that I hold in abhorrence. You are the first Minister to whom I have so clearly expressed myself, because you are the only one whose character inspires me with confidence."

Molleville suggested that he should personally acquaint the King with his sentiments.

"That is precisely what I desire," replied the Duke. "If I dared flatter myself that the King would receive me, I would wait upon him to-morrow."

The Minister spoke to his Sovereign that same evening about the visit of the Duc d'Orléans, and Louis agreed to receive him. The following day he had an interview with his cousin, which lasted over an hour and a half, and the King appeared satisfied. He said afterwards to Bertrand de Molleville:—

"I am entirely of your opinion, the Duke is honestly espousing our cause. He will do all he can to repair the evil that has occurred in his name, and in which it is probable he has had far less share than we believed."

The reconciliation appeared to be complete. But a scene took place the following Sunday which neutralized every good influence, and instead of the gulf being bridged over between the royal relatives, it became wider than ever from that day.

The Duc d'Orléans attended the King's levée on this particular Sunday, after an absence of some years.

The court was ignorant of the meeting between Louis and his cousin, therefore the presence of the Duke caused considerable astonishment. They did not recognize a proof of submission in this visit, but an arrogant threat; for in their eyes the Duke was the most culpable of all the revolutionists, and they attributed every untoward event, every crime, to his influence.

His sudden appearance called forth a unanimous exclamation of indignation. He was jostled, trodden upon, and pushed out of the door. As it was impossible for him to enter the King's room he turned towards the Queen's apartments, where the tables were laid, and as if to insinuate that the Duke meant to poison the food the courtiers screamed:—

"Keep him away from the dishes."

Angry murmurs, ironical hissings and hootings warned him to withdraw, without having seen one member of the Royal Family, and he made his way to the staircase. As he was descending the steps he was spat upon, head and clothes, from above.

Bertrand de Molleville, who relates the scene in his *Mémoires*, says further:—

"The Duc d'Orléans hurried away from the palace with wrath and indignation in his heart, convinced that the King and Queen had been the instigators of this insult, of which they were not only ignorant, but about which they were extremely angry when the incident was told to them. From this moment the Duke encouraged himself in his implacable hatred, and swore to be revenged."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Intercourse between the Tuileries and Coblentz—Marie Antoinette Plays a Double Game.

THE news that Louis had accepted the new constitution was received with very mixed feelings, especially in the provinces.

Immediately after its adoption the King had sent a sensible but touching letter to his brothers, in which he urged them not to augment the difficulties which threatened to overwhelm him. Fearful lest this letter should miscarry he wrote a second, a confidential one, a few days later, in which he repeated his urgent request. His brothers were as unwilling as the other emigrants to accede to the wishes of the King, while they solemnly protested against the new constitution. They declared that Louis could not possibly have agreed to it of his own free will, and maintained that his consent to the same was an infringement of his coronation oath. Finally, they added, that no command from him could force them to swerve from the path which their consciences showed them was the right one. They rejoiced in their displeasure that they had found an excuse which apparently justified them in their rebellious behaviour.

Untrue accusations against Louis and Marie Antoinette were freely circulated in Coblentz. The former was alluded to as "the old man," "the powerless being," and "the man without a will."

The Queen was called "the democrat," and accused of being influenced by the leaders of the Revolution. The local newspapers were so full of insulting expressions against her and her brother Leopold that at last it became necessary to suppress them.

Princess Elisabeth's friend, Madame de Bombelles, wrote

(November 3rd, 1791) to another of the Princess's acquaintances, Madame de Raigecourt:—

"How can the Queen ever have any further confidence in C. D. (the Comte d'Artois) now that she knows the defamatory expressions used by his associates against her and the King? God be praised that I have never let her know one half of what I have heard. But I know quite sufficient to make me confident that if she is as well informed as I am she will never allow her fate to depend upon people who are deeply indebted to her, and yet must rank among her most deadly enemies. I exempt the Comte d'Artois himself. He is honourable and frank, and I am convinced of his good faith; but he is weak, like the majority of the princes of his race, and allows himself to be blindly influenced by his companions."

In the eyes of the emigrant nobles the Assembly of France was nothing more than a set of rebellious subjects, who were keeping their lawful ruler imprisoned. The plan was loudly discussed in Coblentz that an enquiry should be made, and the Comte de Provence chosen to be the head of the Government. It was asserted that the new constitution was as worthless as a blank sheet of paper—that it was a tissue of rebellious propositions or stupidities. Those who admitted that Louis had accepted it honestly and in good faith, looked upon him as a ridiculous monarch, the phantom of a king, who was striving to bring about his own deposition. It is said that at a dinner party an officer broke his glass, exclaiming, "I am a royalist, but not in the cause of Louis XVI."

The same men, who in the early days had advocated the principles of liberty, and who had done away with titles and rights, now reproached him bitterly for the ruin of the old *régime;* and elderly ladies, fanatical adherents of J. J. Rousseau, could not brook the least change in court etiquette. Many of the Queen's household staff even resigned their office on this account.

The mutual feelings of ill-will daily increased between the Tuileries and Coblentz. The right to rule, which the King's brothers arrogated to themselves, was veiled under a certain show of devotion. But this was almost as bitter for Louis and

Marie Antoinette as the insults daily heaped upon them by the people and the Assembly.

The Princes beyond the Rhine strained every nerve to form a European alliance against the Revolution, and made the hated Calonne, who was notorious for his ill-will against Marie Antoinette, their Minister. They knocked at every door and applied to every capital in order to gain help and arms, while they loudly proclaimed that before the close of 1791 there would be a mighty campaign to restore the old *régime* in France.

In the meantime they apportioned all the State offices among themselves, and with flourish of trumpets spread the lie that they had millions of soldiers at their disposal.

The remark of the Swedish Ambassador on the subject was trenchant:—

"The emigrants are incessantly talking of a counter-revolution; but if such a thing were possible it would be kept quiet, if fulfilment were desired."

The King's brothers and his wife all wished to guide the movement as they judged to be best. As we have already said, the Princes aimed at the destruction of the new constitution, but sword in hand. The Queen shrank from the action of the Princes, who, she thought—and with good reason—would exasperate the revolutionists, but not dismay them. Her wish was that the sovereigns of Europe should meet in congress and frighten the rebels.

History reproaches Marie Antoinette, and justly, for her duplicity at this period. Her real feelings were not in harmony with the part she was acting. She had only encouraged the King to sanction the new constitution in the hope of soothing the revolutionists, and when she attached herself to the friends of the Government it was solely in the hope of deriving advantage from the splitting up of parties.

"We have entered upon a new period since the King accepted the constitution," she wrote to Count Fersen. "It would have been more honourable to refuse to agree with it, but it was impossible in our present position. I wish the wording had been simpler, more concise; but this comes from the misfortune of being surrounded by traitors. . . . Moreover, our steps have

been incessantly hampered by the follies of the Princes and the emigrants."

Fersen received this letter October 8th, and replied to it two days later:—

"I regret that you were compelled to accept the new constitution; but I understand your position—it is a terrible one, and you could not act otherwise."

"Do you grasp my position and the part that I have to play all day long?" Marie Antoinette wrote a little later to Fersen. "I do not understand myself, and at times I am obliged to reflect if it is really I that am speaking. But what would you have me do? All this is necessary, and—believe me—we should have been far worse off than we are, if I had not immediately adopted this course; we are gaining time, and that is all that is needful. My health is better than I dared to expect, with all this incessant mental strain and the absence of fresh air. I have perpetually people to see and letters to write, and all my spare time is devoted to my children. This last, and not least, of my occupations procures me my one pleasure. When I am very sad I take my little son in my arms and gain comfort for a moment in his loving embrace."

About the same date she wrote to Count Mercy-Argenteau:—

"It is possible that I yield too much to circumstances, but whatever misfortunes may befall me, I will never act unworthily. It is in trouble that we first realize what we are. My blood flows in my son's veins, and I hope and trust that he will one day prove himself a true grandson of Maria Theresa."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Foreign Powers—The New National Assembly—The Deputation from San Domingo—Family Life in the Tuileries—The Political Situation—Marie Antoinette's Letters to the Emperor Leopold and to Catherine II. of Russia.

THE Royal Family were not unanimous, and foreign powers also were divided in their opinions about the state of affairs in France.

The King of Spain ordered his Minister in Paris to leave for Nice.

The Empress of Russia declared that the King's acceptance of the new constitution was to be overlooked, because it had been wrung from him by force. She added that if Louis and Marie Antoinette had really yielded, it would only prove so much the worse for them. In such a case, she said, the King of France could only be looked upon as a nonentity.

The Emperor of Austria, on the other hand, expressed his satisfaction with the acceptance, and was of opinion that it would be both useless and dangerous to excite a counter-revolution. Encouraged by his sister, as well as by Prince Kaunitz, he did not hesitate to receive the French Ambassador in the most friendly manner. In the meantime a fresh Assembly had replaced the first.

Before the separation of the deputies who had formed the new constitution, it had been resolved that no members of the old Assembly could be re-elected. It therefore became inevitable that most towns and provinces had to elect men who missed the political significance of the meeting, and were mostly imbued with distrust of the King, whose honesty they suspected. This new body showed their colours from the very beginning.

The members of the Left proposed that the King should no

longer be addressed as "Your Majesty," and that he should not sit on a throne when he attended their meetings.

The suggestion was accepted, but it met with so much opposition among the bourgeois of the capital that it had to be withdrawn.

A few days later a deputation from San Domingo arrived to implore the King's protection, as the disturbances on the island were reducing the people to despair.

"Madame," said the leader, when he was admitted to the Queen's presence, "we long to see Your Majesty in your terrible trouble, and to gain comfort for ourselves in the contemplation of your great courage."

The Queen was so overcome that she was unable to reply at once, but on her return from Mass she asked for the deputation again.

"Gentlemen," she said, "it was impossible for me to speak to you, but my silence must have conveyed far more than any words."

Ready as Marie Antoinette personally was to brave any danger, she could not make her husband act, nor strengthen his weak will with her own determination.

She tried once again to rouse him from his apathy as she threw herself on her knees at his feet and pointed to their children.

"Let us summon up courage to terminate this endless strife," she cried. "If our defeat is inevitable we can at least choose the means by which we will die. Let it be as becomes kings, and let us not wait without resistance till we are smothered in our rooms."

But Louis remained unmoved by his wife's appeal. Princess Elisabeth, on the contrary, would gladly have shown herself to the people on horseback at the head of a regiment. She was far more active than her brother, and as courageous as Marie Antoinette.

But unfortunately the views of the sisters-in-law were absolutely different.

From the earliest days of her residence in France the members of her husband's family had been among the Queen's bitterest enemies; and misfortune had not softened them. We have seen,

too, that more than one member of the Royal Family persisted in following out their own selfish plans to the injury of her cause. A strong sense of duty detained the Princess Elisabeth at the Tuileries, but her heart and thoughts were with her brothers in Coblentz. All her hopes were centred in them, and the conduct of the emigrants was a perpetual cause of dispute between the Queen and herself.

The troubles which were making a more fervent Christian of Elisabeth were also increasing her faith as a royalist. She shrugged her shoulders at Marie Antoinette's concessions and her connection with the men of the day. She looked upon the nobility as friends of long standing, the true supporters of the Monarchy. She did not shrink from Civil War—she declared it had begun long ago.

It would be difficult to credit the miserable terms that existed between the saintly, pious Elisabeth and the proud, determined Marie Antoinette, if the Queen herself had not been carried away to write openly on the subject to Count Fersen.

"A letter from Monsieur (the Comte de Provence) to the Baron (Breteuil) has surprised and annoyed us," she wrote; "but we must have patience, and not show our anger too plainly at this juncture. I will copy it, so that my sister (Elisabeth) may see it. I am curious to know how she will reconcile it with all that has gone before. *Our family life is like hell.* It is not possible to speak a word with the best intention in the world. My sister is so outspoken, so guided by designing men here, and so strongly influenced by her brothers abroad, that we cannot talk to each other without being at strife the whole day long. I can see that the ambition of those about Monsieur will be his ruin, and he will never gain his wish. He thought at first that he was all-powerful, and that he could do what he pleased; but he will never play any great part. His brother will inspire far more confidence in all parties, and be preferred to him, if only for the consistency of his conduct. It is a great pity that Monsieur did not return when we were arrested; by that step he would have adopted a course of action which he ought never to have lost sight of—not to forsake us, and he would have saved us from untold sorrow and misfortune.

"We have long been complaining about the numbers who leave the land, and we feel how prejudicial this emigration is, not only to the kingdom, but also to the princes. Then it is appalling to think of the way in which these good people have been deceived, and of the remorse and despair in store for them. Those who had confidence in us, and asked our opinion, have refrained from emigration; or, if they have felt it compatible with their honour to leave, we have at least told them the truth. But what ought we to do? In order to avoid compliance with our will it has become the fashion to say that we are not free, which is but a fact."

There was nothing that excited the impressionable Parisians more than the conduct of the emigrants. The King could act as he pleased, because they mistrusted him whatever he did. Without allies, without adherents, he quietly hoped that the public mind would become calmer; but instead of being pacified, the masses daily grew more exasperated. One of the Paris papers published the following threatening lines against the Queen:—

"Antoinette! We do not ask for domestic virtues. You were not made for them. Only keep yourself from shame. As long as the hyena remains in her cave she is not attacked. But from the moment that she descends to the plains to kill, every citizen, in the cause of humanity, is expected to destroy the monster, even at risk to himself."

There were three active parties in opposition to the Revolution: the constitutional party, under the leadership of Barnave, Dupont, and the brothers Lameth, who voted against the interference both of foreign powers and of the emigrants, and who were willing to try the efficiency of the new administration. The emigrants, as we have already seen, advocated an appeal to the courts of Europe, and grew excited at the thought of fighting side by side with foreign soldiers against their own countrymen. The Queen, as we have observed, was anxious that all the European sovereigns should assemble in Congress, and thus inspire the revolutionists with salutary fear.

Louis XVI. vacillated continually between these different views of the case.

The plan of appealing to foreign powers was certainly distasteful to him, and he shrank from a meeting of the enemies of France.

But infirm of purpose, and weak in bodily health as he was, he finally adopted the very worst course possible, by remaining absolutely impassive.

In the meantime, while others were working for him, and though he was without decision himself, he had, as it were, two cabinets, one consisting of his constitutional Ministers in Paris, and the other, one man only, Baron Breteuil, his secret agent abroad.

Breteuil, who had formerly been both Ambassador and Minister, was strongly opposed to any concessions, and only used the language of dictation and command. He had left France in the early part of 1790, armed with the King's complete but secret authority to negotiate with all the powers of Europe.

After having authorised him to act in his name, Louis could not recall him without betraying the presence of this secret diplomatist.

In this way Breteuil was able to interpret his Sovereign's views according to his own judgment, which resulted in exaggerated zeal for the dignity and safety of his master.

All his transactions with Gustavus III. of Sweden, with Catherine II. of Russia, with the King of Prussia, and with the Emperor Leopold of Austria, tended to rouse them to march against the rebels in his native country.

Meanwhile Marie Antoinette was seeking out new paths with eager, feverish energy.

Without guidance from the King, continually exposed to the consequences of his supineness, and without much hope as to the result, she yet strove to master the details of all sides, as she spent hour after hour reading their reports. She hardly slept at all at night, and her beautiful eyes had become red and swollen; while gloomy thoughts, never-ceasing anxiety, and real work, made up the sum of her day.

She wrote to the Princesse de Lamballe:—

"The King's brothers are unfortunately surrounded by ambitious and turbulent men, who cannot fail to bring about our

destruction after they themselves are ruined. . . . I confess to you that, in spite of my courage, I would gladly die, if I had not my poor children and my husband, who preserves in the midst of all this calamity the most inconceivable equanimity. . . . I weep for my family, for my friends, and for myself. There is nothing but disturbance in the city. The best of the people are on our side, but they are silent, bowed down, and unable to take any steps on our behalf. The only thing for us to do is to appease the rebels now, that we may possibly frustrate their plans in the future. Alas! if only our good folk would understand how deeply we love them, they would indeed blush at the thought of all the sorrow that they are inflicting on us."

The Queen's desire was simultaneously to oppose the plans of the emigrants, to control the King's indecision, the enmity of the revolutionary party, and the mistrust of the royalists, and to entreat foreign powers for support which she *might* find it desirable to reject.

She could not enter the arena of politics without being assailed from countless sides, and she could hardly utter a word without a threatening or malicious construction being put upon it.

In the midst of her work she was constantly seized with uncontrollable anxiety, and crushed to the earth less by the weight of her heavy cares than by daily petty annoyances.

But she dared not lose courage, nor allow herself to be lulled into inaction by the hope of help. She must work even with the conviction that all this exertion, which knew no respite, this burst of energy, aroused but too late, would be exhausted in a struggle which *must* prove useless.

She wrote letters right and left, in which she unfolded her plans, and her agitation is evident as she reverts again and again to the same points, the same expressions.

"The only path for us to follow," she repeats incessantly, "is to try and gain the confidence of the people. It is needful to us whatever course we take. But even if we do gain it, they must all co-operate in order to effect our release. As the powers cannot aid us with troops on account of the approach of winter, we look upon a congress as the only available way of assisting us."

"Deliverance," she further declares, "can only reach us from abroad." She maintains that no help will be given them by the Assembly, which in her eyes consists of "a herd of rascals, blockheads, and fools."

In a letter to Count Fersen she encloses one from the King containing the following:—

"A decided unanimous expression by all the powers of Europe, especially if backed by a strong army, would be the means of bringing about a favourable issue. In the first place it would influence the emigrants and force them to submit, then it would disturb the plans and calculations of the revolutionists. Finally, a congress would inspire all friends of Monarchy and order with fresh courage."

The Queen named her plan first to the Emperor Leopold and Count Mercy, later on to the Empress of Russia (December 30th, 1791), to the Queen of Spain (January 4th, 1792), to the Queen of Portugal and others. The replies from all were vague and discouraging.

October 4th, 1791, she wrote thus to her brother Leopold:—

"I have no other comfort than to write to you, my dear brother. I am surrounded by so much that is infamous that I long for your friendship to solace my weary spirit. I have had the good fortune to meet Count Mercy's confidant, though only once, and he told me of the Count's views, which coincide in most points with those I have entertained the last few days. After our acceptance of the new constitution the people seemed to have more confidence in us; but their devotion has been powerless to check the wicked plans of the evil-disposed. If they only understood our intentions it would be impossible for them to deny us their allegiance. But in spite of apparent momentary security I have no confidence. I believe that our good citizens and the lower classes have really always been on our side; but there is no agreement among them, and we dare not look for it. The masses are led by instinct and their own interest to unite under a chief; but they are not strong enough to resist tyrants who are crushing them, for they are distrustful of each other, and have to fight against miscreants who are completely unanimous and consult together, hour by hour, in their clubs. They are continually

roused to doubt the King's honesty of purpose, and encouraged to still further rebellion. If things happen as I fear—yet once again, I am not blinded by momentary enthusiasm—our troubles will be even greater; it will become more and more difficult to regain lost confidence, and the people, who will let themselves be betrayed, will rise against us. This is a cogent reason to redouble our zeal and use the opportunities we may have. This is all we can do, because the King's authority exists no more, and because the confidence of the masses is the only thing that we can oppose to the enmity of the Legislative Assembly.

"But how can we profit by the confidence of the hour? That is the difficulty! I think that the first and most important step is to regulate the movements of the emigrants—if they return to France in arms all will be lost, and it will be impossible to prove that we are not in league with them. The appearance of an emigrant army on the frontier would be sufficient to add fuel to the flame, and to provide our adversaries with grounds for complaint against us. It seems to me that a congress would facilitate the means of holding them in check, and I expressed this thought to Monsieur Mercy in order that he may communicate it to you, my dear brother.

"This congress plan is very attractive to me, and it would strengthen the efforts which we are making to maintain confidence. Above all things—I repeat it—it would be a check upon the emigrants, besides producing an effect here which would be beneficial to us. I submit this to your serious consideration. Those about me share my views, and I need not enlarge further upon them, as I have already explained myself clearly to Monsieur Mercy.

"Farewell, my dear brother! We love you, and my daughter has given me special instructions to greet her good uncle for her.

"MARIE ANTOINETTE."

The Queen wrote to the Empress of Russia:—

"MADAME! SISTER!

"I avail myself of the first safe opportunity which has presented itself to express to Your Majesty the deep feelings of gratitude in my heart for all the interest which Your Majesty continues to entertain in our terrible position. But, Madame,

I cannot be satisfied unless I wholly trust you with that confidence to which your interest, your noble mind, and your strong character are so calculated to inspire.

"We are left entirely to ourselves, without a soul in whom we can believe, and I wish to try and place our position before you, imploring Your Majesty's forbearance in advance. I understand neither politics nor their language. I am guided solely by the impulses of my own heart. I will begin with a point which it is important to understand accurately, for Your Majesty to be able to judge of our position. The King has accepted the constitution, not because he considers it good, or even practicable, but in order not to give occasion for still greater disturbances and misfortune in the kingdom, which opponents would not have failed to attribute to his refusal. It was in the hope that its defects would the more easily be brought to light if he consented to its adoption, though he trusts to be able to prove that it cannot be carried out. Finally, he accepted it in consequence of the complete uncertainty he was in with reference to the opinions of other powers respecting him.

"Oh, Madame, it does not become me to complain, but those who by the ties of blood, honour, or interest both could and *ought* to have supported us under these present calamities have left us in complete ignorance as to the opinion of foreign powers concerning us—perhaps out of needless fear and solicitude for our personal safety.

"What can we do left thus to ourselves?

"It was a matter of necessity to accept the constitution in order to try and bring the majority of the people to their senses —those who are only led by party-men or madmen—as well as to save the life and property of the many honourable men still to be found in France, who do not cease to believe in their King and duty, but, like ourselves, are terribly weak and forsaken, and would inevitably be the first victims. We have not been actuated by any ignoble feeling; fear for our own safety has had no influence with us. The humiliation to which we are continually subjected, the unseemly behaviour of those around us, which we have neither the power nor the means to suppress, justify the distrust we cannot but feel even in our innermost

circle. Is not this a perpetual moral death, a thousand times worse than physical death, which releases us from all ills? Your Majesty, who knows so well what courage means, will understand that it must indeed be strong to bear sorrows like these.

"But I dwell too long on painful details; we must think of means to remedy them, and it is to Your Majesty's magnanimity, to your generosity, that we appeal in all trust and confidence.

"Since last July I have begged, nay, conjured, the Emperor to interest himself in our affairs, and long ago I communicated to him the plan of summoning an armed congress, consisting of all the sovereigns of Europe."

After unfolding to Catherine this plan, which she had already laid before the Emperor Leopold, Marie Antoinette goes on to say:—

"It has been impossible to acquaint the King's brothers with this scheme on account of the extreme prudence we are compelled to exercise respecting all we plan or do. God forbid that there should be dissension between us, as is commonly reported. We know their hearts by our own, and we are sure that they beat in unison. But it is not so with all those by whom we are surrounded. The thoughtlessness of some, the chattering of others, even their ambition, lays us under the uncomfortable necessity never to speak to them with the perfect trust they may deserve on account of their personal feelings. It is to *your* wisdom, Madame, and to the influence you are able to exercise over them that we commit our dearest interests.

"Have the kindness to guide them in such a spirit that they may be useful to us, and moreover prove to them that they will only destroy their country, miserable enough already, if they persist in acting independently. Trouble is making itself felt, and a little firmness and patience will gain over those nearest to us. But the influence of foreign troops is needful to command general respect, to restrain the princes on the one hand, and on the other to coerce the different parties here, besides providing a rallying-point for those who are loyal.

"It is my intention to write to the Kings of Spain and Sweden, on whose interest we can confidently rely, judging by their upright and noble conduct towards us. The King will also

write to the King of Prussia to thank him for his goodwill, but without entering into the details of our plans. Be so kind as to influence this court, as well as that of Denmark, in our favour, and persuade the Emperor to act at last as my brother.

"Your Majesty sees that I am abusing the confidence with which you inspire me; but it would be such a satisfaction to be indebted to a sovereign who has already won my entire devotion and admiration by the greatness of her character, and it would cause me unspeakable joy to be able to add my gratitude.

"MARIE ANTOINETTE.

"Paris, December 3rd, 1791."

At the close of this long letter the Queen added:—

"Pardon me, Madame, that I end so abruptly, but I do not understand etiquette. The King, who has allowed me to address Your Majesty, requests me to say that all our feelings are mutual, and that he begs Your Majesty, if you have anything to communicate to us, to do so only through Baron Breteuil, who possesses our entire confidence; it is of great importance to us that nobody else should be cognizant of our secrets."

Catherine of Russia sent a cool reply to the letter of Marie Antoinette, which was so full of flattery and submission.

The Empress did not admire the Queen, who in the days of her prosperity had fulsomely praised the Grand Duke Paul and his wife, and Catherine hated her son. While events were concentrating the attention of Europe on the condition of France, and while she was willing to leave it to its fate, the powerful Empress found time and freedom to promote the extension of her empire in the East, to alter the frontiers of Finland, and to meditate on the second partition of Poland.

Catherine did not absolutely refuse to assist the persecuted Sovereigns. Urged by the entreaties of Gustavus III. she even gave an uncertain promise to enter into an alliance for their support. But she sent neither troops nor money, and contented herself with pitying and blaming Louis and Marie Antoinette.

"The King is a very worthy man," she said, "and I am fond of him. But what weakness he shows! He gives his consent to the most preposterous schemes. How can one help a King who will not be helped?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Fersen's Last Visit to Paris—Death of the Emperor Leopold and of Gustavus III.—France Declares War—The Comtesse de la Motte's Libel—The Girondists in Power—Dumouriez.

FERSEN'S thoughts were never absent from the unfortunate dwellers in the Tuileries, especially the unfortunate Queen. An irresistible impulse drove him to Paris. November 26th, 1791, he wrote to Marie Antoinette:—

"Answer me as to the possibility of our meeting quite alone, without servants, in case I get orders from the King (Gustavus III.). He has expressed his wishes to me on the subject."

Among all the rulers who were interested in the fate of Louis and Marie Antoinette, the King of Sweden was the most active, resolute, and forward. He secretly commanded Fersen to go to Paris, and on December 22nd he sent him letters to the French King and Queen, which he was to deliver in person.

In these he advised Louis and Marie Antoinette to make a fresh attempt to flee, and recommended some precautionary measures, which the failure in Varennes had proved to be necessary. He thought it advisable that each member of the family should escape alone, suitably disguised. If Louis could happily cross the frontier he would be able—so said Gustavus, and rightly—to count on the support and intervention of foreign powers. Fearing that Count Fersen would be recognized and pursued, Marie Antoinette strongly and earnestly discouraged the plan of his journey to Paris.

But he finally gained permission to carry out the wishes of Gustavus. He left Stockholm under an assumed name, and reached Paris without any great difficulty on February 14th, 1792, where few people suspected his presence in the capital.

He went to the Tuileries the very evening of his arrival.

"I have been with the Queen," he wrote in his diary, "by my usual way. I met a few of the National Guard; did not see the King."

This first meeting with Marie Antoinette had only lasted a few minutes, but it was long enough to show him that the eight months which had elapsed since he took leave of her at Bondy had left indelible marks in every feature.

The following day Fersen returned to the palace, and this time he found both Louis and Marie Antoinette waiting for him. They consulted as to the possibility of another flight, but agreed that there were insuperable difficulties in the way.

Fersen wrote in his diary about this meeting:—

"Saw the King at six o'clock last evening. He will not leave; he really cannot, on account of the strict watch kept over him. Moreover, he is scrupulous, because he has so often promised to remain, for he is an upright man. . . . He is convinced that there is no help except by force; but, with his natural weakness, he deems it impossible to regain his former authority. . . . At last he said to me, 'Well, we are alone, and we can speak out. Never did anybody find himself in such a plight as this. I know that I missed the right moment. It was July 14th, 1789. I ought to have left that very day. But what could I do when my brother (the Comte de Provence) begged me not to go, and the Maréchal de Broglie, who was commanding the troops, added, 'Yes, we can advance as far as Metz, but what shall we do when we get there?' I did not seize my opportunity, and it has never returned. Now I am abandoned by all.'"

Louis declined to attempt to flee a second time, but he told Fersen to make known to all foreign powers that they must not be surprised at anything he might be forced to do.

That same day the Count had a long conversation with Marie Antoinette. On February 21st he interviewed both the King and Queen, and left the Tuileries in great agitation. Although he had been unsuccessful in persuading them to attempt flight again, he was not altogether dissatisfied with his journey, because the conversation he had had with Louis

and Marie Antoinette had given him a far clearer insight into their real views than any correspondence could have done.

He understood what course they wished him to pursue, and he felt hopeful of success.

The King agreed to let the foreign rulers act, and this in itself seemed to be a step in the right direction.

The Kings of Spain and Prussia were in alliance with the Swedish Sovereign. The Swiss Republic sided with the Monarchists. The Empress of Russia appeared willing to aid in bringing armed force to bear on revolutionary France. Then the Emperor Leopold—that "false Florentine," as Fersen called him—whose silence and reserve had reduced his sister to despair, seemed disposed to do more than talk.

"I wonder what the brother would do if they were to murder his sister?" the Comte d'Allonville one day asked of the Prince de Condé.

"Perhaps he would venture to go into mourning for her," answered the Prince.

Both question and answer show how little confidence was placed in Leopold's interference on behalf of his sister. It was certainly more incumbent on the Emperor of Austria than on anyone else to aid the King and Queen, and it cannot be denied that the friends of the Royal Family were justified in reproaching him for promising help which never came.

In the meantime events were happening beyond the power of peace-loving Louis, and Frenchmen were getting tired of the threats and noisy talk beyond the frontier. They longed to put a stop to the wearisome clamours; a strong spirit of resistance was aroused in them, and they too began to use threatening language against all those who would interfere in their affairs.

Leopold had to yield to public opinion, and in spite of a secret hope that he could yet shirk his duty to join in a war, he entered into a defensive alliance with the King of Prussia.

But an unforeseen blow upset the plans—at least for a time—that had been formed with such difficulty. Leopold of Austria died after a short acute illness, March 1st, 1792.

In spite of the bitter feelings which Marie Antoinette had entertained towards her brother on account of his lukewarmness

in her cause, she was deeply moved by his death. In the first moment of her grief she maintained that he had been poisoned by some French revolutionists—an assertion that spread rapidly, and was credited by many.

But the Queen had not time to weep. She had to think of her own affairs, and of the changes that this sudden death might effect on the political chess-board.

Leopold's successor was a weak and sickly youth of twenty-four.

He certainly announced that he held the same views as his father, and the Chancellor, Prince Rosenberg, as certainly wrote to a lady at the French court: "I hope that the new ruler will remain faithful to the obligations entered into under the late Emperor, and that he will restore the throne and royal authority in France."

Prince Kaunitz still inclined to peace.

Marie Antoinette was disheartened by the uncertainty and delay on all sides, and she sent Baron Goguelat to Vienna, under an assumed name, to beg for a decided answer from her nephew. "*We* have no time to lose," she exclaimed in despair; "for none is being lost by our adversaries."

Trouble seemed to dog her every step, and each plan was foredoomed to failure.

A fortnight after the death of the Emperor Leopold, Gustavus III. was shot by an assassin at a masked ball in Stockholm.

"This is a bullet," said the dying monarch, "that will delight the Jacobins of Paris."

The joy of the revolutionary party was great in France when Gustavus succumbed to his wound on March 29th, and the shout of triumph with which the news was greeted in the club of the Jacobins showed clearly how the Swedish King had been feared.

Louis and Marie Antoinette were petrified with terror when they heard of his death. The previous day Gustavus had sent them a message that "with death at hand it was one of his greatest sorrows to feel that his loss would injure their cause."

Madame de Tourzel, who had heard the sad tidings while in the Dauphin's room, went down to the Queen in great dismay.

"I see by your countenance that you are acquainted with the

terrible news which we have just received," said the Queen. "It is impossible to be otherwise than deeply grieved. But *we* must be courageous. Who can answer for it that we shall not share his fate?"

There was certainly every reason to believe that the assassination of Gustavus III. would have great influence over all the other sovereigns with reference to their unwilling, half-hearted help to the unhappy King and Queen of France.

But, on the other hand, there is no doubt that the Swedish soldiers, from whom such great things were expected, would not have been eager to go to war with a foreign nation who had never done them the least harm. And the opinion has been expressed that even if Gustavus had not fallen by the hand of Ankerström, the troops which he was raising in Normandy with the intention of marching to Paris would have revolted and slain the King, whom they had once loved and admired.*

Louis and Marie Antoinette felt that the death of Gustavus III. had deprived them of their staunchest supporter. But his intention was carried out without his co-operation. The war, which he had striven in vain to kindle, broke forth of itself.

The situation of the royal pair became day by day more critical as the hatred and opposition of the Parisians continued to increase.

It was suggested at a soirée at the house of Condorcet that the King should be deposed, and that the Dauphin should be taken in hand by one of the revolutionary leaders as his tutor. At the same time many plans were discussed as to the fate of the Queen. Sièyes suggested that she should be confined in a convent, or even brought to trial.

The Queen, who knew of these deliberations, talked them over with Madame de Tourzel.

"The King would never consent to such an abominable plan," said the gouvernante.

"I would rather not expose him to the danger," answered Marie Antoinette.

Assisted by Madame Campan she spent whole nights in arranging her papers and burning all letters that might compromise her or her friends.

* Geffroy, *Gustav III. et la Cour de France.*

She was not allowed to appear in mourning after the death of her brother, and an officer, who was seen leaving the palace with crape on his arm, was pursued and ill-treated. A head representing the Emperor Leopold was stuck on the point of a lance on the balcony at the Tuileries.

"The death of the Emperor has done its work," it was said in one of the French papers.

"In the evening that the news came Elisabeth went to confession, and, in spite of her strength of mind, Marie Antoinette was seized with violent hysterics. Leopold is dead, but the most to be dreaded of all our enemies is in perfect health, and living in our midst. It is true that *he* is gone—his sister is still with us."

The King was at last compelled to yield to the force of public opinion, to the declamations of the Girondists, and to the unanimous appeals of his Ministers. April 20th, 1792, he declared war against the King of Hanover.

He had been unable to make up his mind until the very last minute, and his eyes were filled with tears when he announced his decision in the Assembly. The Queen did not shrink from war, but looked upon it as their last chance of deliverance. And who has the right to be surprised that she sought for help abroad, when the lives of her husband and children, as well as her own, were daily threatened in France?

War was declared, to the delight of the Assembly, who had been longing for months for this issue. Their wishes were known to foreign powers, for the Queen had spoken of them to Count Mercy in a letter dated March 26th. And yet neither side was prepared.

The emigrants had robbed France of her best generals, and several regiments had joined them beyond the frontier. There was no organization in the army, which was imbued with the universal spirit of revolution, and both officers and men were thrown into confusion at the first onset. The French troops fled in wild disorder, and many officers were murdered by their own men.

The defeat caused a moment's terror in Paris. The revolutionary members of the Assembly and of the press seized it as

an excuse for insulting the King and for distrusting his Ministers, but more especially for redoubling their persecution of the Queen.

Marie Antoinette was blamed for the defeat of the army, and it was openly reported that she had issued orders which had produced a panic among the soldiers. The people became even more turbulent and excited than they were before. A Greek, who was living in France, and who had hailed the advance of the Revolution with enthusiasm, wrote May 1st:—

"Do not be surprised if I send you a letter in a day or two to tell you that the unfortunate King and his consort have been murdered."

A fortnight later an adherent of the Girondist party, Carra, wrote in his paper, *Annales patriotiques*, that an Austrian Committee had been formed which held its meetings in the Princesse de Lamballe's apartments under the presidency of the Queen, and that plans were being laid for a second Eve of St. Bartholomew, in which all true patriots were to be massacred. Carra added that the King meant to flee, and to hand over all fortresses, as well as the army, into the hands of the emigrants. And other reports equally unreliable all tended to inflame the already excited minds of the people.

The Comtesse de la Motte, who some years previously had injured the reputation of the Queen by the use of her name in connection with the famous diamond necklace episode, had written a libellous article about her in England, which reached France just at this juncture.

Madame Campan heard of it, and ascertained at the same time that the MS. could probably be bought for the sum of one thousand gold pieces. She had told her mistress what she knew, but Marie Antoinette refused to buy it, saying that she had always despised such scandalous libels. She added that if she were weak enough to buy the pamphlet in order to prevent its publication, it could not escape the Jacobin spies, and would only give them a fresh cause of complaint against her.

The Queen's view of the case was all the more true and prudent, as there were already so many libels current about her, that one more or less could not be of any importance.

Louis XVI. was unfortunately not so prudent as his wife.

He dreaded the painful recollections which the name of la Motte would awaken, and bought up the whole edition of the papers as soon as they were printed. Instead of destroying them on the spot, la Porte—the man who had made the purchase for the King—locked up every copy in a room of his own house. Shortly afterwards he was denounced by the Assembly, and began to fear lest his house should be searched, which made him resolve to get rid of the pamphlets.

He had them taken in broad daylight to the china manufactory at Sèvres, where they were burnt in an enormous fire which had been prepared for the purpose. Two hundred workmen were looking on, but they had been forbidden to approach the fire. This extreme caution, coupled with imprudence, naturally aroused their curiosity, and they reported the occurrence to a magistrate. In spite of the explanation furnished by the manager of the works and Monsieur la Porte, it was maintained that the libellous pamphlets committed to the flames were the documents connected with the imaginary Austrian Committee mentioned above.

On the 16th of March General Dumouriez was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. He acquired great influence over the King, but was unable to gain the confidence of Marie Antoinette.

Roland and Clavière became members of the King's Council the 25th of the same month, and a month later Servan was made War Minister. By the appointment of these three the Girondists—who had always been the most bitterly hostile party to Marie Antoinette—came into possession of the power for which they had so long been striving.

Chiefly by the persuasion of Roland the Assembly published a decree, May 26th, that all priests who refused to swear to the new constitution of the Church should be banished from the land on the motion of twenty citizens. And a short time afterwards Servan induced the Legislative Assembly to summon an army of 20,000 men to Paris from all parts of the kingdom, to be present, July 14th, on the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, and then to take up their permanent quarters in the neighbourhood of the capital.

These measures not only insulted the dignity of Louis XVI. but threatened his position at the same time, and the persecution of the clergy offended his conscience. He therefore reflected a long time as to whether he would sanction them.

Ever since their entrance into the Ministry, Roland, Servan, and Clavière had publicly and unceasingly plotted against the King, instead of defending him. Roland's crowning insult to his Sovereign was on the 10th of June, when he laid a very offensive letter before Louis, and afterwards showed his utter want of tact by reading it aloud in a Council of Ministers, although he had sworn to keep it secret.

The letter was written under the influence of Madame Roland, who criticised and censured the conduct of both Louis and Marie Antoinette most cruelly, and even called the King a perjurer.

This was too much, even for the forbearance of Louis XVI. He dismissed the three Girondist Ministers on the 30th of June, and commissioned Dumouriez to form a new Ministry. The Assembly replied that all three men possessed the confidence of the people's representatives.

Dumouriez, who was called to be first Minister, declared that he could not be of any use to the King unless he would consent to sanction these two fresh resolutions of the Assembly. It is true he himself looked upon them as mischievous, but he thought it wisest to yield at this juncture.

With reference to the resolutions of June 8th the King was not averse to follow Dumouriez' advice, although he foresaw that the entrance of 20,000 revolutionists into Paris would strengthen all the hostile political clubs, and give that support to the Assembly which had recently been denied to himself by the disbanding of a body-guard of 1800 men, which the new constitution had previously sanctioned.

But Louis was not to be shaken about the expulsion of the clergy, in spite of all Dumouriez' remonstrances. He looked upon the trials which he had recently had to endure as a punishment for having allowed the first ecclesiastical laws, and he was firmly determined that he would never again be guilty of a similar sin.

Dumouriez therefore sent in his resignation (June 15th), and made up his mind to leave Paris and return to the army.

He went to the Tuileries on the 18th to take leave of the King.

The interview was an agitating one, and Dumouriez made a last effort to persuade Louis to follow his advice. He spoke of the unpopularity of the clergy and of the danger which threatened the throne, as he predicted that the King, the Queen, and their children would fall a prey to the fury of the people.

"I am prepared to die," replied the King, "and I forgive all now."

Louis made use of his prerogative as a constitutional monarch, and put his veto on the two measures brought forward by the Assembly.

The same day he wrote to his confessor: "Come to me; I have never longed for comfort more earnestly than now. I have done with men, and I look to Heaven. I hear that some great trouble is to happen to-morrow; my courage will not fail."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

June 20th, 1792.

THE faubourgs had long been preparing for a demonstration, and the dismissal of the Girondist Ministers provided them with an excuse. The 20th of June was fixed for their purpose, and the court did nothing to avert the threatened danger. The King relied on Pétion, now Mayor of Paris, who had sworn to keep order; and moreover he felt perfect confidence in the troops that surrounded the palace. He watched the approach of the mob without fear.

His terrified servants rushing hither and thither, the howls of the people as they came nearer and nearer, and the bursting open of doors at last sufficed to rouse a feeling of uneasiness in himself and his family, as Louis hastened towards the room from whence the noise issued.

A side-door creaked. The King was running that way, into the very jaws of danger. Pieces of the framework fell at his feet, and screams, oaths, and curses greeted his ears from the outside.

In a firm voice he ordered two lacqueys to open the door. "What have I to fear in the midst of my own people?" he asked, as he advanced towards the insurgents.

Reverence for the King's person, which had been hereditary for hundreds of years, arrested the attack for one minute, which Louis' companions made use of to pull him into a window niche that they might at least protect him.

The King's first thought was to hold back the crowd from the room in which the Queen was sitting, and he ordered the door into the Council-chamber to be locked. As he turned round he saw his sister Elisabeth, who was coming towards him with out-

stretched arms; she had made her escape from the other ladies, not without a struggle.

"That is the Austrian," shouted several among the crowd as they caught sight of the Princess, and then rushed forward with uplifted hands to strike her to the ground.

But the officials told them who it was, and the name of Elisabeth, whom they respected, was sufficient to disarm their wrath.

"Alas!" said the Princess, "let them believe that I am the Queen. I might save her by dying in her stead."

A few noblemen had by this time interposed between the King and the people with their swords drawn.

"Sheathe your swords," said the King calmly; "these crowds are more excited than guilty."

Shrieks of hatred continued to resound in the room, while banners inscribed with abusive language and pictures of tattered garments and miniature guillotines were waved over the head and before the eyes of the King. He was made to put on a red woollen cap, such as the galley slaves wore, and which was now looked upon as the symbol of liberty. A soldier handed him a bottle, and he drank to the prosperity of the people.

Meanwhile dense crowds had forced their way into the Tuileries gardens, where they amused themselves by applauding the insults to which the King was subjected.

It was reported for one moment that Louis had been killed, and all eyes were turned to the window in the expectation that his body would be thrown down.

But suddenly the shout of "Vive le Roi!" was heard from the interior of the palace. His calm intrepidity had disarmed the revolutionists for one brief moment.

"Do not be afraid, Sire," said a soldier of the National Guard.

"My friend," replied the King as he took the man's hand and raised it to his breast, "lay your hand here, and feel if my heart is beating more rapidly than usual."

While the unfortunate King was standing almost alone in the presence of the mob, the Queen was subjected to similar insults in another apartment. She had struggled in vain to reach her husband, but was kept back almost by force.

"Let me go! My place is at the King's side," she cried.

"No," said a voice near to her, "your place is with your children."

Marie Antoinette felt that this was true, and allowed herself to be led to the apartment of the Dauphin.

But the rioters were screaming outside the door, and she was taken by a secret passage into the King's room, and from there into the Council-chamber, which she reached pale and trembling to find her children and a few ladies already there.

The servants pushed the large table used at the meetings of the Council before the ladies and children.

Crowds were forcing their way in, led by Santerre, who shrieked, "Make way, so that the people can see the Queen."

The procession began.

One man carried a rod, with an inscription "For Marie Antoinette." Another a little gallows, with a doll dangling from it, under which was written "Marie Antoinette à la lanterne." A third had a guillotine, at the foot of which were the words "The people's instrument of justice for tyrants. Down with Veto and his wife!"

Santerre kept himself at the head of the rabble and guided their movements.

"Madame," he said to the Queen, "you have been deceived. The people bear you no ill-will, and if you wish it you can make one and all love you as much as they do this child," pointing to the Dauphin.

"Look here," he continued as he turned to the crowd; "this is the Queen! There stands the Dauphin!"

A man rushed up to Marie Antoinette. "If you love the people, put this red cap on the head of your son!" he shouted.

The Queen took the heavy cap and put it on the head of the boy, who seemed crushed by its weight and heat.

"Take the cap off," Santerre ordered; "the child is suffocated."

The men seemed to be touched with pity, but the women never ceased shrieking out abusive epithets. Disgusting expressions fresh from the vilest haunts of immorality sounded through the palace, and in the ears of the royal children.

The Queen's pale cheeks became crimson when she heard

them, but her offended modesty did not daunt her man-like courage.

A young, well-dressed girl with a sweet face cast the most hateful insults at the head of "the Austrian."

"You are a monster," she shrieked, "we will hang you!"

Marie Antoinette was amazed at the contrast between the refined features of the young girl and her coarse expressions.

"Why do you hate me?" she asked. "Have I ever offended you, or done you any harm?"

"No," answered the girl, "you have done *me* no wrong, but you have brought misfortune over the whole land."

"Poor child," said the Queen, "you have been told so. I am the wife of the King of France, the mother of the successor to the throne. I am French now, and I shall never see my native land again. I can be neither happy nor unhappy except in France. I was happy when you loved me."

The girl was moved in spite of herself by the pain and gentleness of the Queen.

"Forgive me," she said; "I see that you are good."

"The girl is drunk," said Santerre, as he pushed her roughly back among the crowd.

It had struck half-past nine at night before the mob left the palace, and the agonies of the Royal Family had lasted for five hours.

The Queen, who had been reassured by the Princess Elisabeth as to the fate of her husband, now hastened to rejoin him.

She had stood unmoved before the rioters, but her calmness forsook her when she saw the King. She threw herself down at his feet. No tears came, but one heart-rending shriek.

Her dishevelled hair, her deathly-pale countenance and quivering lips, her look of utter wretchedness, touched the hearts of all who were standing by.

Several members of the Assembly had hastened to the palace, and one of them said to the Queen:—

"You were thoroughly frightened, Madame, confess it now."

"No," answered Marie Antoinette, "though I suffered terribly in my absence from the King. But still I had the consolation of being with my children, and of fulfilling my duty."

"I cannot excuse everything that occurred," continued the deputy; "but you must allow that the people were very good-natured."

"The King and I are convinced of the natural kindheartedness of our people," replied the Queen. "They are not bad, but they are misled."

"How old is mademoiselle?" asked the man, pointing to Marie Thérèse.

"My daughter is of an age in which one feels but too keenly the horrors of such scenes," said Marie Antoinette, as she turned her back upon the man.

An ardent republican, Merlin de Thionville, who was present, could hardly refrain his tears.

"You are weeping," said the Queen, "to see the King and his family so cruelly treated by a people whom he has always striven to render happy."

"Yes, I weep," said Merlin, "as I witness the wretchedness of a beautiful, warm-hearted mother of a family. But do not be mistaken. I do not shed one single tear for the King or the Queen. I hate them both."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Public Feeling in France after the 20th June, 1792—Federation Festival—Lafayette—Conversation of the Queen with Madame Campan.

All classes of society in France were roused to anger when they heard of the attack upon the Tuileries on the 20th June, 1792. They admired the calm and courage of the King and his family, and countless addresses were sent to the capital from the provinces urging that the guilty should be brought to justice.

Many celebrated men had joined the Revolution in 1789 with enthusiasm.

They were in opposition to Louis XVI. as an absolute monarch, but they did not wish to see him a personally unhappy man, nor would they credit the reports that were continually being circulated, that he had been in secret league with the enemies of the kingdom.

One effort after another was made in the palace itself, which proved that among the nobility too there were still some loyal and faithful friends.

The octogenarian Maréchal de Mouchy had placed himself in front of the King on the 20th June to protect him with his person.

When he came to the palace the following day the Queen hastened towards him and said, "I heard of the courageous manner in which you defended the King, and heartily share in his gratitude to you."

"Madame," replied the veteran—referring to some members of his family who had urged on the Revolution—"what I did was very little in comparison with the harm I wish I could undo. It is not I who have brought it about, though it touches me so nearly."

Malesherbes came forward after the Maréchal had retired, and the old statesman was wearing his sword, contrary to present custom.

"You have not worn a sword for a long time," said one of the courtiers to him.

"You are right," answered the former Minister. "But who does not arm himself when the King's life is in danger?"

The attack on the Tuileries had not strengthened the revolutionary party. Right-minded citizens censured the criminal intentions which had been clearly exposed that day, and even many of the Girondins began to feel the risk of unreservedly giving the reins of government into the hands of the dregs of the people.

We read in a private letter from Paris about this time:—

"I cannot tell you how greatly the King has risen in the esteem and respect of all since the 20th of June."

A strong ruler might have been able to strike a decisive blow under these circumstances, but poor vacillating Louis had neither will nor energy; nothing could rouse him from the apathetic resignation which was the main cause of his ruin.

And even Marie Antoinette began to deprecate severe measures when she was told that the ringleaders in the late outbreak were to be brought to justice. She knew that the valet Hue would be summoned as a witness, and she said to him, "Spare the guilty. Be as forbearing in your evidence as truth will allow." Simultaneously with the addresses that streamed in from all sides there appeared large placards in which Louis was represented as "a false, treacherous King, unworthy to occupy the throne."

Madame Roland and her most intimate friends looked upon the intrusion of the people as a well-deserved humiliation for the haughty Queen, while they listened with impatience and anger to the praises bestowed on the Royal Family for their courage.

Pétion, the Mayor of Paris at the time, who had prudently kept away from the palace on the 20th June, and left the King and his family to their fate, appeared at the Tuileries the following day.

"Sire," he said, "I have just learnt that you watched the approach of the people to the palace. I am come to inform you

that the crowd consisted of unarmed citizens, whose intention it was to erect a May-pole. I know, Sire, that the civic administration of the Commune has been spoken against, but its manner of procedure is well known to you."

"And it shall be known all over France," replied the King curtly. "I accuse nobody directly. I saw the whole occurrence."

Pétion tried to justify himself as well as the disturbance.

"Far worse things would probably have happened if it had not been for the measures adopted by the Commune; not to you personally," he added, looking boldly at the Queen, who was standing by. "You, Sire, will always be treated with respect."

Pétion's manner was defiant, and the King became angry.

"Silence!" he said in a loud voice. "How is respect shown to me? By men forcing their way to me with weapons in their hands, by bursting open my doors and assaulting my guard?"

"Sire," objected the Mayor, "I know my duties and the extent of my responsibility."

"Do your duty," replied the King with irritability. "You are responsible for the peace of Paris. Adieu!"

The garden of the Tuileries was closed for a time after the riot, but the people had access to the terrace of the Feuillants' Convent, which was looked upon as a part of the building in which the National Assembly met.

Large placards warned the citizens that they were not to go into the garden, which the infuriated mob at once named "Coblentz," and called the terrace "the people's land." There were inscriptions to acquaint the passers-by of this new typography: "Citizens, respect yourselves! Use your bayonets against this feeble barrier, citizens! Beware of this foreign soil, this Coblentz, the hot-bed of corruption!"

The injunction had such strong influence on the people that all obeyed, although the King after a while ordered the gates to be opened, and although the summer heat was stifling, and the trees in the palace garden afforded refreshing shade.

If an individual dared to overstep the boundary fixed by the revolutionists he quickly repented of his temerity.

One day a young man went from the terrace into the garden without heeding the placards.

"À la lanterne with him!" was heard on all sides.

The ready-witted man took off his shoes, brought out his pocket-handkerchief, and wiped the dust from the soles.

The people shouted "Bravo!" and carried him off in triumph.

Before very long, just when it suited their plans, the authorities gave permission to make use of the Tuileries garden again, when crowds assembled, shouting and laughing, to enjoy themselves.

Towards the end of July the Queen was obliged to give up her walks on account of the insults to which she was exposed. The moment she appeared there were wretches ready to assail her ears with libellous, disgusting stories of herself and her mother, and even the sanctity of the altar was no protection to her, for the clamour from the outside followed her into church.

The unhappy Queen knew not what to think, and though she generally looked upon herself as doomed to a cruel fate, her spirits would sometimes revive when a ray of hope gave her fresh life. She was fully aware that the people had hated her for years past, and yet she could not accustom herself to the fact. She horrified her ladies by saying at times that she would go down and speak to the mob.

"Yes," she cried, her voice quivering as she paced the floor with rapid strides, "I will go down and shout to them: Frenchmen, you have been cruelly made to believe that I do not love France; I, the wife of the King, the mother of the Dauphin!"

But after this moment of excitement, she realized but too clearly that she could never rouse the compassion of her persecutors.

Her whole life, day by day and hour by hour, was one mental struggle, and the short space of a month had terribly altered her appearance, as well as that of the Princess Elisabeth. The Queen especially was hardly to be recognized, the terrors of that June day had aged her twenty years; she was worn out with fatigue, anxiety, and sleepless nights.

Many had sworn to help her and those nearest to her; but where was the fulfilment of these promises?

Marie Antoinette, her children, and the few who had faithfully remained in her service, were exposed to peril and the fear of death every moment of their lives. The Queen never went to

bed without thinking of assassins, and a dog was in her bedroom at night that his bark might warn her of their approach.

The King lived in ceaseless nervous terror of what might happen.

The libels and disgusting caricatures that were found pasted on the windows every morning, the political occurrences, the constant failure of plans for his rescue, had all affected him so acutely that he seemed to be paralyzed.

He did not dare to undress, and three or four times in the night he used to creep to the doors of the rooms occupied by his wife, sister, and children, impelled by intense anxiety for the safety of his dear ones.

"Are you there?" he whispered.

They answered, "Yes, we are still here."

Then, when they had all fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion, they were roused by fresh revilings and insults under their windows.

The whole family looked forward with terror to the fête which was to take place on the 14th July, on which occasion the King was to renew his oath to the constitution on the "autel de la patrie."

Marie Antoinette and others, too, feared that he would be murdered that day. Deputations from the provinces had arrived in Paris filled with the spirit of revolt and bitter hatred against the King. Yielding to the earnest pleading of his wife, Louis had had a sort of cuirass made of several layers of quilted cloth, sufficiently thick to resist the first thrust of a dagger. Madame Campan relates that she tried it on him in Marie Antoinette's room. The Queen was in bed. The King drew the lady-in-waiting aside and said to her, "I consent to wear this protection because the Queen wishes it; but I shall not be assassinated, plans are altered, and I shall perish by other means."

When her husband had left the room the Queen prevailed on Madame Campan to repeat what he had said.

"I think so too," she rejoined; "the King has felt for some time that what is happening in France to-day is a counterpart of the Revolution in England under Charles I. I begin to fear that he will be brought to trial—as for me I am a foreigner, they

will kill me! What will become of my poor children?" and she burst into tears as she thought of their future fate.

Madame Campan hastened to get her some soothing drops, but she refused to take them.

"Women who are happy have nervous attacks," she said. "I do not suffer from them; my will shall control my body."

A bodice similar to her husband's quilted cuirass had been made for the Queen, and her ladies entreated her to wear it.

"It would be a blessing if the rioters would kill me," she said; "they would free me from this sorrowful existence."

The confederation fête of 1790 had been kept with jubilant enthusiasm, and from early morning the Champ de Mars had been crowded with joyous spectators; but all was changed now.

In 1792 the large square was empty up to twelve o'clock, the people having first assembled on the spot where the Bastille had formerly stood, and where to-day the foundation stone of a column to commemorate its fall was to be laid.

On the Champ de Mars—the real scene of the festival—a spot had been railed in with posts of wood covered with grey cloth to represent a grave, a gruesome monument in honour of those who had fallen on the frontier.

On one side were the words:—

"Tremble, tyrants! Vengeance is near!"

A couple of hundred yards farther on nearer the Seine there was raised a sort of May-pole, called the Tree of Liberty, fastened into a huge pile of wood, and hanging from the branches escutcheons, knightly orders, helmets, crowns, cardinals' hats, the papal tiara, and St. Peter's keys. A regal crown was hung by the coats of arms belonging to the Comte de Provence, the Comte d'Artois, and the Prince de Condé. At eleven o'clock the Royal Family drove to the Ecole Militaire on the Champ de Mars. A detachment of soldiers rode in front, followed by three carriages. The gentlemen of the court occupied the first, the Queen's ladies the second, and in the third were the King and Queen, the royal children, the Princess Elisabeth, and the Princesse de Lamballe.

Marie Antoinette was looking more dignified than ever, and Louis' countenance was calm and benevolent as usual. The descendant of so many mighty rulers and his family took their

places on the balcony of the Ecole Militaire to wait for the procession which had now left the ruins of the Bastille.

It was, indeed, a singular crowd that was approaching; men and women rushed forward, many of them intoxicated, and most of them armed with lances and daggers; disreputable females adorned with flowers vying with the men in singing "Ça ira!"

Two days previously the King had ordered the temporary suspension of Pétion from his office, but the Assembly had defied the King and reinstated him as chief magistrate in Paris the very day after his dismissal. *He* was the hero of the hour, this "King Pétion."

"Long live Pétion! Pétion or death!" was shouted close under the balcony where Louis was standing.

Six detachments of the National Guard marched, surrounded by *sans-culottes* wearing their red caps of liberty, and others carrying a little model of the Bastille and a printing press. These stopped from time to time in order to print and distribute their revolutionary songs.

But in the midst of the general uproar and singing some of the troops of the line and the grenadiers of the National Guard made it clear that they were still faithful to their King: one of the regiments halted under the balcony while the men sang with strong enthusiastic voices:—

"Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille!"

Louis the Sixteenth left the Ecole Militaire and joined the members of the Assembly, in order to go on foot with them to the "Autel de la Patrie." The King, the deputies, the soldiers, the masses, all jostled and hustled each other, and the danger to which Louis was exposed was terrible among these mad fanatics, who shrieked and howled like wild animals.

Several of his anxious friends asked him what he could possibly do if he should be struck down by a dagger or a bullet?

There was not a vacant spot among that swarming throng.

It was only slowly and with increasing difficulty that Louis could elbow his way up to the altar—a broken column which had remained forgotten on the Champ de Mars since last year's fête. If the soldiers had not forced a way it would have been impossible for him to reach it.

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"Only a Louis XVI.," says Madame de Staël, "only a martyr could have borne himself in such a crisis in such a manner. There was nothing unusual about him, beyond a certain dignity wanting on ordinary occasions; he challenged respect by his mere appearance. I watched from a distance his powdered head, distinguishable from the dark-haired men around him, and his embroidered silk coat which contrasted with the costume of the crowd, and as he mounted the steps of the altar he looked to me like some holy victim voluntarily offering his life for others."

The Queen was still on the balcony, a prey to the most terrible anxiety. She stood immovable for a whole hour, forgetting all around her as she watched the dangerous progress of the King with her eye-glass.

She could hardly breathe; emotion and horror were stifling her.

Suddenly she screamed out, "He has slipped down two steps!" Her cry made those standing near her start and turn round; her whole frame quivered, and her countenance betrayed such sorrow and suffering, such self-abandonment, that the hearts even of her adversaries were touched.

"The expression of her face will never be effaced from my memory," says Madame de Staël. "Her eyes were swollen with weeping, while her magnificent dress and her dignified bearing were in marked contrast with the crowd around her, from whom she was only separated by a few of the National Guard, while the armed men who had congregated on the Champ de Mars gave far more of a revolutionary than festive character to the scene.

A group of suspicious-looking characters had gained possession of the steps, which made it impossible for Louis to get quite close to the altar.

A member of the Legislative Assembly had the presence of mind to shout, "Grenadiers, look to your weapons!" The revolutionists were ashamed when they heard the words, and controlled themselves.

Meanwhile the anxiety of the Queen could not be calmed; it seemed to increase in intensity.

The King swore the national oath, while forty-five cannon placed along the Seine thundered forth and spread the smell of gunpowder over the whole city.

He was called upon to set fire with his own hands to the tree on which hung the royal crown, with the arms and badges of the nobility and clergy; but the monarch spared himself this humiliation.

"Feudalism no longer exists in France," said he.

Then he returned to the Ecole Militaire by the same way that he had left.

Marie Antoinette saw him coming and her spirits revived. She hastily rose from her seat, and hurried away to meet him at the foot of the stairs.

Louis, with his habitual calmness, took his wife's hand and pressed it tenderly.

* * * * * *

On June 28th, a few days after the forcible entrance of the people into the Tuileries, General Lafayette had unexpectedly appeared in the capital to demand, in the name of the army, that the rioters should be punished, that the Jacobin Club should be dissolved, and that the maintenance of the King should be under strict regulation.

As he entered the Assembly the Right welcomed him with applause; the Left, on the contrary, received him in gloomy silence, which was soon exchanged for audible murmurs of displeasure.

A few months had sufficed to hurl him from his pedestal as the people's god. He might have even now been invincible at the head of trustworthy troops, but he had come alone, relying on his personal influence, and the same men who had formerly worshipped him, could now only treat him with coarseness that was disgusting. He was coldly refused admittance at court, because in their blind confidence that foreign powers would help, neither Louis nor Marie Antoinette wished to be rescued from their position by the General.

After fruitless deliberations with his friends among the officers of the National Guard, he returned despondent and disappointed to his camp on June 30th.

Lafayette had always longed for honour and popularity, but he really loved the King and wished to serve him. He remem-

bered that he was personally indebted to Louis, and probably recalled the blood which his forefathers had shed to support the throne, now tottering to its fall.

With the fête as an excuse he and the old Maréchal Luckner, who had been completely won over to the royal cause, begged for permission to be present. By the help of these two men it would have been quite possible for the King and his family to leave Paris in broad daylight. The National Guard would have covered their flight as far as Compiègne, where fifteen regiments had been stationed to ensure their further safety.

The proposition had been laid before the Ministry for enquiry, and it was unanimously sanctioned in the Council.

In spite of his repugnance to surrender himself to the constitutionalists, whom he held responsible for his painful position, Louis was not averse to agree to the plan. It was Marie Antoinette who opposed it, who obstinately refused to entrust her fate to Lafayette, whom she looked upon as her evil genius.

She had seen him appear as a spectre before her at each critical hour of this great Revolution. It was he who had brought her as a prisoner to Paris on October 7th, 1789, and had remained in the Tuileries as her jailer. The thought of him had filled her with terror. That memorable night when she fled from the palace and lost her way on the Place du Carrousel, it was his adjutant who had pursued the Royal Family to Varennes, and Lafayette himself had witnessed the humiliation of their return. The mere mention of his name caused her to shudder with terror and hatred.

Princess Elisabeth had entreated in vain: "Let us forget the past, and cast ourselves on the mercy of the only man who can save the King and us."

Marie Antoinette could not endure the thought of being indebted to the General, and Mirabeau in his last confidential interview had impressed upon her that she was not to believe in him.

"Madame," he said, "mistrust Lafayette; if ever he has command of the army, you may rely upon it the King will be a prisoner in his tent."

In the meantime the plans for the rescue of the Royal Family

had been communicated to the friends of the King, who during the fête had mingled with the crowd, while waiting for some expected signal to rally round him.

Two companies of the Swiss Guards had escorted the Royal Family, and it was hoped that they would be able to force a way through the crowd and conduct the King and his family out of the city.

But Louis said nothing, and gave no sign; he let the last chance of rescue slip from his grasp. Foreign troops were daily approaching nearer, and Marie Antoinette trusted to these for deliverance. During one of the clear July nights previous to the fall of the Monarchy, she had confided her hopes of rescue to her lady-in-waiting, Madame Campan.

The moon was shining into the room and the window was open.

"We shall be free before another moon," she said. "I know the plan of campaign of the allies. *That* day they will be in Verdun; *this* day in Lille." But she was not without anxiety as to what might occur in the interval.

"The King is no coward," she observed; "he is possessed of great, though passive courage, but he is afflicted with a false bashfulness and distrust of himself, to be attributed quite as much to his education as to his character; he dare not command, and he dreads having to speak in public.

"He lived in nervous anxiety under the eyes of Louis XV. till his twentieth year, and this continual constraint has increased his natural reserve. In our present condition a few well-chosen words to the people of Paris would materially strengthen our party, but the King will not speak these words."

The Queen then spoke of herself and why *she* could not take the lead.

"I could act," she said, "I could put myself at the head of the troops if it were necessary, but I should only place new weapons into the hands of the King's enemies; shouts of wrath against 'the Austrian,' against the rule of a woman, would be re-echoed over the whole of France. If I were to come forward the King would be put into the shade. A Queen who is not a ruler must remain inactive under circumstances like ours, and prepare herself to die."

CHAPTER XL.

The Morning of August 10th, 1792—The Last Review.

Brawls and fighting were going on in every street, café, and theatre, as well as in the Palais Royal.

The rumblings of the approaching storm were distinctly heard.

Danger became hourly greater, and the National Guard wavered in the midst of the general fray.

A number of them were on the side of the court, but by far the larger portion stood in sharp opposition to their comrades.

The Legislative Assembly had pronounced the country to be in danger. The Commander-in-Chief of the allied forces—Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick—had issued a manifesto full of fearful threats against the French, besides which the wildest rumours added to the general excitement. It was said that the palace of the Tuileries was filled with arms and other warlike stores, and that the non-juring priests had found refuge in the King's house.

"Where shall I put my family in safety?" the King exclaimed again and again.

Even now, at the eleventh hour, several distinct plans were formed for the rescue of Louis and his family. Narbonne, Bertrand de Molleville, the Duc de Lioncourt, and Madame de Staël had schemes for them. The court physician advised a change to Compiègne, but the consent of the Legislative Assembly was necessary for this step, and Louis dreaded a repetition of the Varennes scenes. He lavished money on Danton and other agitators in the hope of securing their support.

The storm was expected to break loose on August 10th. The 9th had been comparatively calm, and it was not till evening that a change was observable.

Roughs from the faubourgs began to assemble in the streets, and ladies on their way to the palace were insulted, and made to retrace their steps. It was a glorious night, the sky was clear and studded with stars. All the windows of the Tuileries were open on account of the heat, and from a distance it looked as though the palace had been illuminated for a fête.

All was apparently quiet and peaceful within the walls, but the pulse of all beat at fever heat, and confused thoughts were occupying alike the minds of the royal pair, their courtiers, and their servants.

The bells of the whole city began to ring at midnight, and the beating of drums mingled with the sound of the tocsin. The revolutionists gave their signal, and the royalists too began to assemble.

The people were on the move, and from the balcony the Queen and Princess Elisabeth could clearly distinguish the advance and retreat of the crowds along the streets. Louis XVI. had been in his bedroom, but he came out and went into his study, the so-called "Council-chamber." The pious monarch had sent for his confessor, and under his guidance had prayed most fervently that he might be endued with the courage and resignation for which he craved.

The issue of the contest between the King and his people was still doubtful. Nine hundred Swiss and a detachment of the National Guard, faithful to the Monarchy, were inside the palace, while a body of cavalry was stationed outside.

The Swiss, who to a man were ready to die, stood in serried ranks in the chapel and round the door leading into the King's room. The captain of the regiment, Baron de Salis, was in command of the sentinels on the staircases, while a body of reserves under Captain Durler stood in front of the "Marsan-pavillon" in the so-called "Jardin Suisse."

And at the last minute the nobles came, ready to fight and die for their King. But of the numbers of brilliant men whose only duty it had been to protect and attend upon the King, there were hardly 200 left, and of these most were old and infirm.

They had hoped to find weapons in the palace, but this precaution, like so many others, had been forgotten. Few of the

nobles had more than a rapier or a couple of pistols, and wearing silk coats, handling dress swords, they looked more suited for a ball-room than for action.

A few officials in the Civil Service and the King's personal servants joined the nobles, armed with sticks and fire-irons.

Louis was touched with their devotion, but did not realize how few defenders he really had.

Marie Antoinette was calm and collected as she addressed a few grateful words to each member of the little band in her cheery, winning way, which roused the zeal and strengthened the courage of them all.

The National Guard stationed in the courtyard tried to insist on the dismissal of the nobles, but the Queen opposed their demand.

"Gentlemen," she exclaimed, as she pointed to them and the public officials, "they are our friends and yours. They ask for nothing but to fight at your side. Place them where you like, they will obey you and follow your example. They will show the defenders of the Monarchy how to die for their King."

The peaceful night was in singular contrast with the movement of the people in the streets and the warlike preparations within the palace.

Princess Elisabeth was still standing on the balcony. "Come here," she said to the Queen; "look, the sun is rising."

Marie Antoinette looked and sobbed. It was one of the last mornings on which she would see the sun rise through a window without iron bars.

Faithful to old customs, some of the courtiers maintained that it was not seemly to be seated in the presence of the King and Queen. But their protestations were useless, and all etiquette vanished in the face of ever-increasing danger. Friends and defenders went and came, seating themselves on tables or chairs, even on the floor.

The Queen and Princess Elisabeth had stools. The Princesse de Lamballe crouched at the feet of the Queen, clinging to her knees. Madame and Mademoiselle de Tourzel, the Princesse de Tarente la Tremouille, and the Queen's other ladies sat about here and there among the armed men.

Toward three o'clock in the morning the approach of the crowd

was seen in the distance, and the assailants drew nearer and nearer from the Place du Carrousel in regular order, dragging their cannon and ammunition.

The report of a gun was heard in the palace grounds.

"Alas! that will not be the last," exclaimed Marie Antoinette.

The Dauphin had been put to bed, but the Queen had him roused and dressed.

"Mamma," said the poor child, "why do they want to do harm to papa, he is so good?"

The thought of fighting roused Marie Antoinette, and she entreated the King to show himself to his defenders, that his presence might encourage them.

Louis yielded to his wife's persuasion and went out on to the balcony. His eyes were bloodshot and his sight was dim and uncertain. A kindly but meaningless smile was on his lips, and instead of showing himself as a soldier in uniform, he wore a violet coat, and his wig was all awry. He was greeted with shouts, which meant sympathy, not confidence. He left the balcony to pass through the rooms followed by the Queen, his sister, the children, and the Princesse de Lamballe. From time to time he uttered a few words, inaudible to the standers-by.

Lamartine describes the scene: "Marie Antoinette," he says, "gave some emphasis to her husband's words by her noble carriage, by the proud yet friendly movement of her head, and the expression on her face. How gladly would she have shared her own spirit and courage with the King! She was weeping inwardly, but the few tears that fell were quickly dried by anger and her strong will. Her pale face worn by sleepless nights, her undaunted demeanour, gave her an almost inspired look. Her eyes, which quickly responded to the expression of others; her glance, which entreated, stirred, or defied, according to the cold, friendly, or angry faces of others; the traces of her now fading beauty; the recollections of the adoration which she had received in the very room where she was now imploring protection—all imprinted upon her person a majesty born of courage, sorrow, and dignity. She was the Niobe of the Monarchy, the statue of royalty hurled from the throne, but neither soiled nor dishonoured in the fall."

The fidelity of the soldiers outside the palace was not assured. Louis hesitated to expose his family to a cold, possibly hostile reception, and when he had reached the foot of the grand staircase he begged his wife, the other ladies, and the children to return.

He held his last review alone. This was certainly a mistake, for the determined manner of the Queen, the touching beauty of the Dauphin, might have influenced the people far more than the feeble good nature of the King had power to do.

It was about six o'clock when Louis, agitated and timid, entered the Champ de Mars. Several of his companions had declined to accompany him any further, and had turned back with the Queen.

He felt uneasy and depressed, though he controlled himself to appear unconcerned.

The soldiers surrounded him. Their chief had not a word to say to them, and yet they shouted "Long live the King!"

The further he went from the palace the colder was his reception, and from the north terrace the cry was, "Long live the nation! Down with Veto! Down with the fat pig! Down with the tyrant!"

The mob literally clung to him, repeating their abusive epithets.

The reception on the terrace at the Feuillants' Convent was even more hostile, and a few faithful servants had to place themselves in a double row in order to protect his person.

Not many years before Louis had been considered the most powerful and exalted of monarchs, but at this moment he stood there, in the opinion of all, the weakest, most miserable man that ever wore a crown. Even those who looked upon him with neither anger nor scorn had nothing but pity to offer him.

He stammered out a few words, but the people screamed:—

"Long live the nation!"

"Yes," said the King; "the nation and I, we are one!"

The noise around him was so deafening and incessant that it was impossible for him to utter even the few words that were on his lips, for every time that he attempted to speak his voice was drowned by noise, shouts, and screams. Looks of hatred and smiles of derision met him on all sides.

The Queen, the children, and Princess Elisabeth had sought for rest in his study, which was also occupied by his counsellors.

On hearing the shouts one of the gentlemen went to the window. The Queen rose too.

The Minister closed the window and tried to lead her back, but she had heard the threatening words addressed to the King.

"Great God," she cried; "all is lost! It is against the King they are shrieking. This review has done more harm than good." And she sank down in utter despair.

Sorrowful at heart, and bathed in perspiration, Louis entered the room.

Earlier in the evening it had been suggested that the Royal Family should take refuge in the Legislative Assembly. Marie Antoinette had rejected the advice, for it seemed to her that to relinquish the struggle was tantamount to signing their abdication.

By this time the palace was surrounded by a dense crowd, shrieking as with one voice like thunder rolling through the air, "Deposition! Deposition or death!"

An officer opened the door of the Council-chamber, put in his head, and shouted:—

"You hear that the people are clamouring for the departure of the King."

"Well," answered one of the Ministers, "let the Legislative Assembly announce it."

"But after the departure what will happen then?" the Queen enquired.

The officer did not reply.

"Your last day has come," screamed another officer, as he entered the room. "Madame, the people have the upper hand. What a blood-bath there will be!"

"Gentlemen," shrieked Marie Antoinette, "spare the King, spare my children."

Then, choked with tears, she stretched out her hands to her husband as if to protect him. The Procureur-Syndic, Roederer, entered the room at this minute.

"Your Majesty," he said, "you have not five minutes to lose. There is no other place of safety for you except in the Legislative Assembly."

"You may nail me fast to these walls before I consent to leave them," screamed Marie Antoinette.

Roederer repeated his assertion. The Queen persisted, and angrily refused to assent to such cowardice.

"We shall be all alone there," she said.

Roederer replied:—

"Yes, you will be alone. Defence is impossible; the whole of Paris is astir. Will you then, Madame, draw down judgment on your own head if the King, your children, yourself, should be murdered—not to speak of the faithful servants who are around you?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Marie Antoinette. "If only I alone could be the victim!"

Her emotion was so violent that her face and neck turned dark red in a moment, while big drops of perspiration rolled down her cheeks.

And yet it would, even now, have been possible to save the King and his household.

Napoleon, who as a young officer was witness of the events at a distance, observed that if he had had the command of two battalions of Swiss and a few horsemen he would have undertaken to give the rebels a lesson that they would never have forgotten. And Barbaroux, the furious democrat, said:—

"The mistakes made by the rioters, the faulty measures of the assailants, the terror of some, the unscrupulousness of others, the strength of the palace, were all causes that would have ensured victory to the court, if the King had not deserted his post. If he had shown himself at the head of his troops, by far the larger majority of the people would have renewed their allegiance to him."

The Queen besought her husband to take the lead among his defenders. But Louis hesitated, and then he *would* not.

"Let us go," he said. But the Queen persisted in her resolve not to leave the Tuileries. It was not till the King assured her with tears that he would not leave without her that she yielded, in the hope of saving his life and that of her children.

Then she turned to Roederer. "You answer for the person of the King; you answer for that of my son," she said.

"Madame," replied Roederer, "I promise to die at your side. That is the only thing that I can do."

CHAPTER XLI.

The Royal Family Leaves the Tuileries—In the Journalists' Gallery—Death of the Swiss Guards—Fall of the Monarchy.

THE palace clock had just struck eight in the morning when the royal pair walked past the faithful few that had accompanied them.

"We shall come back," said the monarch to his friends and servants.

"We shall come back," the Queen repeated; but neither she nor her husband had a spark of hope left.

The King approached the door, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at his side.

He had long been only the shadow of a King, and now he seemed to be heading his own funeral procession.

Marie Antoinette, who had taken the arm of the Minister of Naval Affairs, was holding her son by the hand. She was followed by Princess Elisabeth with Marie Thérèse, and the Princesse de Lamballe closed the procession with Madame de Tourzel.

The Queen was weeping.

One of the National Guard mistook the cause of her tears, and said:—

"Your Majesty has nothing to fear. You are surrounded by faithful citizens."

"I fear nothing for myself," she replied.

As Princess Elisabeth looked at the crowd she exclaimed:—

"All these people are misled. I wish they would change their mind, but I do not desire their punishment."

Marie Thérèse had tears in her eyes, and the Princesse de Lamballe said sorrowfully:—

"We shall not return to the Tuileries."

The summer had been dry and sultry, and the leaves on the trees were already yellow. As they walked through the park the Dauphin amused himself by kicking the fallen leaves.

"They are falling early this year," observed the King.

One of the leaders of the Revolution had foretold that the Monarchy would fall with the foliage.

Those of the National Guard who were still devoted to the King tried to force a way through the crowd.

A citizen went up to Louis.

"Take my hand," he said, "it is that of an honest man. In spite of all your faults I will clear the way for you. But as for your wife, she shall not come into the Assembly. It is she who has brought all this misfortune on us Frenchmen."

"Away with the woman, or we will kill them all!" was heard from among the crowd.

Marie Antoinette had understood the words, but she walked quietly on.

Meanwhile a messenger had been sent to the Legislative Assembly to announce the arrival of the King, and twenty-five members had been deputed to meet him. They joined him in the great avenue at the foot of the terrace of the Feuillants.

It was crowded with people, and one man armed with a long pole shouted incessantly:—

"You are the cause of our misfortune. You shall not enter the Legislative Assembly. This must come to an end. Down with them!"

Roederer was standing on the fourth step of the terrace.

"Citizens!" he cried, "I demand silence in the name of the law! You seem intent on preventing the King from entering the Assembly. You have no right to hinder him, for he has his place there according to the rules of the constitution."

The deputies confirmed his words, but the mob refused to give way, and the man with the long pole went on shrieking like one possessed, "Down with them! Down with them!"

Roederer rushed upon him, seized the pole, and hurled it into the garden.

The crowd was so closely packed that a thief found opportunity to steal the Queen's purse.

A soldier (a "blue grenadier") caught up the Dauphin, and Marie Antoinette uttered a piercing cry, believing that her son was being torn from her. But the man raised the child on to his shoulder and spoke kindly to both mother and son.

Another man said to the King, "Sire, we are honest folk, but we will not submit to be deceived any longer. Be a good citizen, and do not delay to dismiss your priests and your wife."

The Princess Marie Thérèse relates:—

"We had to wait half an hour before we were allowed to enter the hall. Several of the deputies opposed our admission. There we stood in the little narrow passage, which was so dark that we could not see a hand before us, and where we distinctly heard the wild howls of the mob. I never remember feeling death so near as in that moment, when I was perfectly convinced that we should be murdered.

"At last we got permission to go inside. As soon as we had entered, my father said with a loud voice that he and his family had come to seek the protection of the Legislative Assembly, and thus hinder the French people from committing a fearful crime.

"Places were assigned at the bar, and then a dispute arose as to whether my father should be allowed to be present during the deliberations.

"It was alleged that they could not permit him to remain without offending the 'sovereign people.' However, after many empty, wordy speeches we were put into the reporters' gallery."

Marie Antoinette crept into the farthest, darkest corner, where she could at least be screened from the hateful or compassionate looks of the members.

The King sat in front, and the Princess Elisabeth, the Princesse de Lamballe, and the children occupied a bench in the background. A few nobles who had accompanied them stood by the door. The noise in the streets became alarming, until it was feared that the crowd would force their way in and murder the King.

Vergniaud, who was president that day, commanded the iron railings that separated them from the Assembly to be removed, that Louis and his family might take refuge among the deputies if it should be necessary. There were no workmen to be had, so

some of the nobles and members had to pull down the railings, the King himself lending a helping hand.

The gallery was so narrow and so low that it was almost impossible to stand upright, while the August sun streamed into the crowded space, where the occupants were nearly stifled.

The Queen's lips were parched, but the rigid calm of her countenance spoke more of scorn than pain, and the haughty expression of her mouth, so well known in the days of her power, was noticeable.

With uplifted head she was awaiting the blow that had to come. Her daughter looked at her and dried her tears as she contemplated her mother's perfect composure.

The Dauphin could not understand the seriousness of what was going on, and incessantly questioned his father about this and that. The King pointed out to him some of the more prominent deputies, and told him the names of the different speakers.

All at once a soldier rushed in and demanded the deposition of the King.

A second entered and, pointing with his blood-stained hand to the King's seat, offered to rid the country of fat Monsieur Veto.

Poor little Charles Louis began to understand now, and hid his face on his mother's lap.

* * * * * *

After the Royal Family had gone a great many of the National Guard returned home, a few only remained and joined the rioters. The Swiss had left the courtyard and were in and near the palace.

The mob came on, and the soldiers who had congregated inside the palace made common cause with them.

The Swiss, who had been ordered not to fire but only to defend themselves, had not long to wait.

A shot was fired and they seized their arms. The assailants fled in haste at the first volley, leaving their guns behind them.

The Swiss prepared for a fresh attack, though they anxiously foresaw that their gunpowder would give out, and they would be exposed to the fire of the enemy without a chance of defending themselves.

The rioters soon returned, ashamed of their precipitate flight at the first onset, and shots were now fired continuously from either side, while some of the buildings on the Place du Carrousel caught fire.

The thunder of the cannon was heard in the Assembly. The deputies on the Left became pale with fear and anger as they cast uneasy, furious glances on the feeble King, whom they accused of having instigated a general slaughter.

Marie Antoinette covered her face, which had become crimson, at the report of the guns. Her eyes shone as vague hopes were aroused in her mind. But it was but for a moment; it was her protectors who were being murdered.

The shouts became louder and louder, and the Swiss were told to lay down their arms.

Without hat or sword, a nobleman named d'Hervilly had pushed his way through a shower of bullets right up to the Swiss in the palace.

They tried to explain to him the measures they had taken to defend the Tuileries.

"Never mind that now," he exclaimed, "make your way to the Assembly."

"Yes, brave Swiss," said another nobleman, "go to the King. Your forefathers have done the like many a time."

The Swiss obeyed, though they were reluctant to leave the scene of action.

The drummers who had not fallen were sought out, and in spite of the balls that were flying round them on every side, they managed to get the soldiers into marching order.

But an unforeseen accident befell them on their way between the Tuileries and the Legislative Assembly.

Several battalions of the National Guard had taken no part in the previous combat, but the Swiss had hardly entered the long avenue before the French soldiers opened fire upon them from the shelter of the trees, and scores of the King's brave defenders were ruthlessly killed.

Impelled by his zeal Baron Salis rushed into the Legislative Assembly sword in hand.

"The Swiss!" was shouted on all sides. Several deputies

sought safety by jumping out of the window. One man turned to the captain and ordered him to compel his troops to sheathe their swords.

He declined to do so.

Captain Durler was led before the King.

"Sire," he exclaimed in a choked voice, "I am required to lay down my arms."

"Lay them down," said the King. "I will not allow such brave men to perish."

Then he wrote the following words on a strip of paper:—

"The King commands the Swiss to lay down their arms and to return to their barracks."

The messenger was despatched immediately.

The departure of the Royal Family from the Tuileries had proved more than a disappointment, and respect alone had restrained the Swiss from expressing their displeasure. The order which they now received to lay down their arms acted like a thunder-clap on these brave soldiers. Some wept in sheer madness, others swore that they would defend themselves with their bayonets. But discipline prevailed even in this terrible moment. They made the last sacrifice required of them by their King—they laid down their arms.

Most of them were shot by the people on their way from the Assembly. About 200 were taken prisoners and put to death later on. The wounded, who had been left behind in the Tuileries, and those who had not heard the orders to leave with the King, were massacred without mercy.

In order to spare the lives of the guilty, Louis had let the blood of his most faithful and devoted servants flow in streams, and he afterwards bitterly repented of his weakness.

The fire from the Place du Carrousel had spread into the streets, where the crowds were hindering and even shooting at the firemen, who had been sent by the authorities. The mob forced their way into the palace, which had been vacated by order of the King, and which now became the spoil of his foes.

These denizens of the faubourgs behaved like wild animals, and the old palace was soon the scene of the most abominable outrages. Doors were torn from their frames, shots were fired,

and servants and Swiss cut down indiscriminately. The rabble stole all they could and destroyed the furniture and carpets, wreaking their vengeance especially on everything that had belonged to Marie Antoinette. They threw down from the windows the large mirrors in which—so they said—Medicis-Antoinette had studied the hypocritical face which she showed to the people.

They broke into the cellars and staved in the wine-butts, so that wine and blood flowed together in streams over the floor, on which lay the drunk and the dead.

Tipsy men, arrayed in royal robes, seated themselves on the throne. Women of ill fame dressed up in the Queen's gowns, lay in her bed, and even insulted the dead bodies that lay around.

But the ladies of the court were spared in the midst of this wild confusion.

Those in waiting and several others, among them the Princesse Tarente la Tremouille and young Pauline de Tourzel, the only daughter of the royal children's gouvernante, had all assembled in Marie Antoinette's room when the fight began.

From a distance—with what sickening terror God only knows —they had listened to the firing, the howling of the people, and the heavy thud of the bodies that were thrown from the balcony into the street.

The murderers at length forced their way to the door of the room where they were. A sentinel stood outside, but he was cut down as he tried to ward off the mob.

The Princesse de Tarente, who heard him fall, went forward and opened the door, holding Pauline de Tourzel by the hand.

"Kill me, but spare the life and honour of this young girl," she said. "She has been entrusted to my care, and I have promised to give her back to her mother. Let the mother have her child, and take my blood."

"We do not kill women," said a tall, heavy fellow.

The men lowered their swords in a second, and helped the ladies in their flight over the corpses that covered the rooms and the staircases.

Night drew on, and the Tuileries were still the scene of

untold horrors of destruction and death, until the fire at length reached the palace itself, and the gruesome day was over at last.

While all this was going on fresh deputations were continually besieging the Assembly, urging with ever-increasing vehemence the deposition of the King. They threatened to push their way in, to drag him out by main force and then kill him.

Treasures from the Tuileries were brought into the Assembly, and Louis and Marie Antoinette could see from their places the blood-stained hands of the thieves and murderers as they laid down, with insulting remarks, the things they had stolen from the palace.

"One moment," writes Marie Thérèse in her diary, "they uttered the most revolting accusations against my father and his family, at another they dragged in nobles of the court, half dead with wounds and mutilation, while they forced some of our servants to bear false witness against my father before his face.

"And then, to make the whole scene more blasphemous, they strewed the Host, snatched from the churches, all over the floor."

The Queen looked on while her books, her jewel cases, and ornaments were brought in and thrown in a confused heap on to the President's table.

She glanced at the King with a reassuring smile, pressed the hands of Princess Elisabeth and the Princesse de Lamballe, and kissed her children. She had still treasures that she could call her own, of infinitely greater value than those of which she had been deprived.

The heat became more and more unbearable in the closely-packed room. The Queen tried to wipe the face of the Dauphin, but her handkerchief was wet with her tears. She asked Count Rochefoucauld, who was standing near, to lend her his, but it was soaked with his blood.

The President proposed that the King should be temporarily deposed. The people clamoured for more decided measures, and muttered their displeasure from the galleries when Vergniaud's suggestion was accepted. Within a short time immense placards were seen posted on every street corner to announce that the

King was deposed, that his civil list was withdrawn, and that the Ministers were dismissed.

Louis listened to the sentence of his deposition.

During all the stormy debates he had calmly contemplated the members through his eye-glass, and even exchanged a few observations with some of them; then, before the eyes of all, he had eaten a chicken with relish and emptied a bottle of wine.

Not a look, not an expression of his countenance was altered when he learnt that he had lost his throne. He remained sitting with as much composure as if it had been the question of another, not of himself.

Marie Antoinette felt a sort of numb resignation come over her, the strained, angry expression on her face became softened, and she closed her eyes for a moment, as though seeking strength in secret prayer.

As long as the struggle lasted her courage had been stronger than her resignation, but when there was nothing left to do nor to hope for, she calmly relinquished all that she had striven to retain during three sorrowful years. The crown which had been an uneasy burden for so long lay shattered at the feet of the populace. But this deposition cost her far less than the humiliation to which she had been subjected, and her loving smile now sought for comfort in the devotion of her children.

CHAPTER XLII.

Three Days in the Feuillants' Convent.

THE night was half over before the Assembly rose. It was then determined that the Royal Family should be conducted to the neighbouring Feuillants' Convent to seek what rest they could.

The King, the Queen, their children and companions had been shut up for fifteen hours in the narrow reporters' gallery, half stifled for want of air and light, besides being the witnesses of their own downfall. They were conducted to their quarters through a double row of National Guards, and followed by curious crowds, who stared into the carriage. Most of them were armed with swords and daggers, all reeking with the blood of the murdered Swiss.

The Dauphin shuddered with terror as they ascended the dark staircase that led into the deserted convent.

A nobleman took him up in his arms, and the Queen whispered a few words in his ear, which seemed to reassure him.

"Mamma has promised that I shall sleep in her room, because I was good with those nasty men," he said to the nobleman.

A meagre supper had been provided, but the children only were able to eat a few mouthfuls.

Meanwhile the riff-raff outside were surging like the sea, and clamouring for the Queen's head.

"What has she done to you?" asked the King mournfully.

There were five empty cells in the convent, the second of which was assigned to the King, the Queen and her daughter occupied the third, the Dauphin and Madame de Tourzel the fourth.

The first served as a sort of ante-room, in which a few faithful friends watched over their fallen Sovereign.

Marie Antoinette went in to her husband for a few moments, full of vain regrets that they had left the Tuileries without a show of fight.

"Perhaps things would have been very different if we had had the rioters arrested," she said.

"By whom?" Louis asked in an annoyed tone.

The Queen said no more, and returned to her own cell.

The door would not fasten, the stone floor was broken, and the filthy, ragged hangings flapped in the draught. Hard pallets and straw-bottom chairs were the only furniture.

Below, in the courtyard, the rioters never ceased dancing and singing. Gloomy thoughts kept the Queen awake, and it was not till six o'clock in the morning that a couple of hours' sleep brought her peace.

The capital awoke early. The people were wild with excitement, and the King's friends in despair.

Pools of blood clotted by the summer heat, and piles of naked, mutilated bodies covered the Tuileries gardens and the Place Louis XV.

Crowds ran aimlessly about, attacked peaceful passers-by, knocked at the street doors, or shrieked and howled outside the convent. Statues were thrown down, and everything defiled that could possibly recall the rule of kings, while all those who were known to be hiding in cellars were shot down through the gratings.

Whole families wandered about among the bodies seeking the dear ones whom they had lost. The sun, which was shining on all these horrors, at length roused the sleeping Queen.

The Princess Elisabeth had been up some time and had dressed the children. The poor little Dauphin was distressed about his pet dog, which had been killed after they left the Tuileries.

"There are greater sorrows than that," Elisabeth said to him; "pray that God will save you from them."

Then she took Charles Louis and Marie Thérèse to their mother's bedside.

"Poor children," sighed the Queen. "How cruel it is to have promised you such a splendid inheritance, and then to be obliged to say all is over for us."

Some of her waiting-maids who had escaped from the wreck of the palace came to see the Queen, and could not restrain their tears when they found her sitting on the edge of her wretched pallet with a woman of the people, who looked after the deserted convent, arranging her hair.

Marie Antoinette stretched out her arms to her servants. She hardly dared to look at them, and it was some time before she could control her emotion sufficiently to speak to them.

"Come here, unhappy women," she exclaimed at last, "and see one who is far more unfortunate than you are, for it is she who is the cause of all your trouble."

Hue, the valet, had saved his life by jumping out of the window and throwing himself into the river. He had remained hidden in the city for the first day, but on the second he hastened to the Feuillants' Convent. The Queen overwhelmed him with questions about those whom they had left in the Tuileries. She spoke leniently of all who had forsaken her, and gratefully of those who had remained faithful.

"It is a comfort to me," she said, "that the friends I have lost are more than counterbalanced by those whom I have gained in my troubles."

The Royal Family possessed neither clothes nor money. A Swiss officer, who resembled the King in figure, sent his uniform for the use of his master. The Duchess of Sutherland, the wife of the English Ambassador, had a son about Charles Louis' age, and sent linen to the little Dauphin.

Marie Antoinette was thankful to receive some clothes for herself from the Duchesse de Grammont, and so poor had the daughter of Maria Theresa become that she was grateful for twenty-five gold-pieces offered to her by her waiting-women.

Louis and his family remained three days in the Feuillants' Convent. Each morning at ten o'clock they were conducted to the Assembly, where they had to listen to the proceedings, and finally hear the sentence of death pronounced on those who had fought for them on August 10th, and who had escaped the vengeance of the populace.

They were brought back under a strong escort, which, however, barely proved sufficient for their protection. A well-dressed

young man contrived one night to rush up to the Queen and to brandish his dagger in her face.

"Abominable Austrian," he cried. "You wanted your countrymen to wallow in our blood, and you shall pay for the thought with your head."

Marie Antoinette heard the insult in scornful silence.

The Legislative Assembly decreed in the first instance that the Royal Family should be taken to the Luxembourg, but the Commune were of opinion that the old palace of Marie de Medicis was not suitable for the housing of such guests. They maintained that they would be sure to try and make their escape by the vast cellars under the palace. After further debate it was arranged for them to be taken to the Temple.

The Queen shuddered when she heard it, for she had always had a horror of the place.

"They are going to put us in the Temple," she said, "and turn it into a prison. I entreated the Comte d'Artois over and over again in former years to have it pulled down. My intense dislike to the Tower must have sprung from a presentiment of all that I should one day suffer behind its walls."

The Commune further decided that nobody should be allowed to accompany them except the Princesse de Lamballe, Madame de Tourzel, and her daughter.

"So I am a prisoner," said Louis. "Charles I. was more fortunate than I am. He was allowed to have his friends about him until he ascended the scaffold."

He then turned to the few attendants who were still in the convent and commanded them to leave.

"Gentlemen," said Marie Antoinette, sobbing, "this moment makes us feel how appalling our position has become. Hitherto your presence and devotion have alleviated our sorrows."

On leaving each one quietly placed on the table the money and valuables he had about him.

The King saw it, and motioned with his hand that they were to take back these tokens of their fidelity.

"Keep them," he said; "I hope that you have all a far longer time to live than I have."

"The 20th of August at nine o'clock at night," the Princess

Marie Thérèse relates, "two men came to fetch us in a coach to hold eight persons, and we were told to get in. They sat with us, and shouted 'Vive la nation!' The road to the Temple was so thronged with an excited mob that our escort did not dare to stop for a minute, and yet we were two whole hours on the way. Not the least sympathy was shown us. On the contrary, our companions had the cruelty to point out everything that could offend us, and were especially zealous that we should see how completely all royal statues had been destroyed."

It was eleven o'clock when they reached the Temple. The entrance was so low that the King and Queen had to stoop as they passed through.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Life in the Temple.

THE Temple consisted of two towers, a larger and a smaller one, the latter of which was at first assigned to the use of the Royal Family.

Marie Antoinette's room, which she shared with her daughter, was on the second floor, where the Dauphin and Madame de Tourzel had a room together. The Princesse de Lamballe's was a dark ante-room adjoining the Queen's, and the Princess Elisabeth and Pauline de Tourzel occupied an old kitchen. A room for the King was hastily prepared on the third floor, but the little party usually assembled in the Queen's room, as it was the largest.

The King spent each day with his family, but they were never alone; a jailer, changed every hour, always sat with them.

Marie Antoinette had only one short week to enjoy the society of the friends who had loved her so deeply. The night of August 19th messengers were sent by the Commune to remove all persons not belonging to the Royal Family.

The Queen tried to retain the Princesse de Lamballe, and persisted that she was a relation, as she clung to her weeping bitterly. They had to be separated by force, and the men dragged the fainting Princess down the stairs and outside the walls, behind which was her friend and Queen.

"Take care of the Princess," cried Marie Antoinette, sobbing, to Madame de Tourzel and her daughter, who were following her; "speak for her on every possible occasion, and spare her as much as you can from replying to malicious and compromising questions."

The Queen was overwhelmed with grief after the departure of the Princess. The loss of her friend, and the fear that the dear

ones who were still with her might be torn from her, rendered her almost speechless for a time.

The Princess Elisabeth tried to console her. "Do not lose courage," she said; "God never sends greater trials than we can bear."

An unexpected circumstance occurred to cheer the prisoners for a time. Hue, the valet, had managed to get permission to go to his master.

"How delighted I was when I entered the Temple," writes the faithful servant in his *Mémoires.*

The 26th of August the valet Cléry was also allowed to enter the Tower. He and his wife had served the King and Queen in the Tuileries, and he now sought to help them in their loneliness.

Cléry's emotion was not less than Hue's had been when he saw his master again, and Marie Antoinette expressed her satisfaction in the warmest terms that he had come to them.

In her desolate condition she felt the deepest gratitude to this man, who strove to cheer her children by every means possible, and to soften the hard lot of herself and her husband.

The King was thirty-eight when he was taken to the Temple to enter on this new period of his life; Marie Antoinette was about thirty-seven; Princess Elisabeth was in her twenty-ninth year; Charles Louis was seven on the previous 27th of March, and Marie Thérèse was nearly fourteen.

After the ladies had left, Princess Elisabeth shared a room with her niece, and the Dauphin's bed was placed by his mother's.

The King rose every morning at 6 or 6.30, dressed himself without assistance, and remained in prayer and meditation till nine o'clock.

The Queen and the Dauphin rose still earlier. It was only during the first morning hours that Marie Antoinette felt herself in any degree free. The jailers came at the same time as Hue and Cléry, and did not leave till late at night.

She, too, spent the first hour of the day in prayer. She could not keep her gaze on heaven during the strife and conflict of the day like her husband, neither could she understand her sister-in-law, whose soul seemed to live in the very presence of God. As a wife and mother she felt herself bound to earth;

she longed for love and work. And even here, within these prison walls, she could not prevent a half-anxious, half-hopeful listening for the tramp of foreign troops coming to their relief.

But misfortune was purifying her soul, and these few weeks had taught her more than all the years of her brilliant court life.

And in the "sweet morning hour" she turned to Him who gives all earthly thrones and takes them at His will. The jailers often surprised her as she knelt by her bedside, with folded hands and her prayer-book wet with tears.

They all breakfasted together at nine o'clock, and then Louis taught his son reading, writing, Latin, and geography, and heard him recite lines from the works of Corneille and Racine. The Queen was busy at the same time with her daughter's education. These lessons by a Queen without a crown and a captive King were generally given every day between ten and twelve.

When the weather was fine they used to walk in the garden at one o'clock, accompanied by four jailers and a captain of the National Guard.

The soldiers and workmen occupied in the Temple pressed closely round them, and sang revolutionary songs or obscene ballads, varied with roars of laughter and coarse, offensive epithets. The walls were covered with pencil sketches, here a guillotine, there a gallows for "Messalina and her wolfish cubs." Further on Madame Veto's dance, the execution of Marie Antoinette and her pig, and so on again and again.

They had to continue these walks, in spite of daily persecution, for the sake of the children's health; but occasionally they were cheered by just one ray of brightness.

From the highest stories of the houses that surrounded the Temple a glimpse could be had of the garden, and curious or compassionate faces were often to be seen at the windows. From some of these garrets flowers or strips of paper, with a few friendly or sympathising words, were sometimes surreptitiously dropped.

At two o'clock the family returned to their Tower. At first the Queen adhered to her old custom of dressing for dinner, and exchanged the gown she had worn in the morning for a brown, flowered one, which she put on daily until she became a widow.

She used to dress in Princess Elisabeth's room, but one day a jailer followed her in, and required her to change in his presence. Indignant to be thus intruded upon and watched, she resolved to wear the same gown all day. After dinner the King dozed, the ladies worked, and the Dauphin prepared his lessons.

The taste for needlework, which in her happier days had often helped Marie Antoinette to endure the tedium of court etiquette, now became an invaluable resource, and often helped to dispel her gloomy forebodings. She had formerly been filled with almost childish glee on the completion of some piece of fine embroidery. Now she stitched like a poor seamstress, mending clothes for the King and her children, and patching her own threadbare gowns.

The sending of some new linen for the Royal Family became a new excuse for the insolence of the Prison Committee. It had been marked with a crown, but the ladies were ordered to pick it out; and Elisabeth and Marie Antoinette quietly removed the emblem of greatness which had brought them so much sorrow.

The Commune had given the post of gate-keeper of the Temple to a man named Tison, and according to authentic accounts his wife was appointed to do the lighter part of the work in the Tower, but her real task was to act as a spy upon every word and action of the royal pair.

She was younger and more tender-hearted than Tison, and wavered between her pity for the prisoners and her fears lest it should militate against herself and her husband. The fact of seeing the Queen of France dependent upon her indulgence fairly turned the woman's brain; she alternated between kindness and treachery, between tears shed at the feet of the Queen, and false accusations against her.

The cobbler Simon, who later on became so notorious as the guardian of Louis XVII., was overseer of the improvements that were being made in the Temple. He enjoyed treating the King as his equal, and ordered his men to remain covered in the presence of the Royal Family.

The behaviour of the jailers became daily more unbearable. They broke the prisoners' bread into little bits to make sure that it concealed no letters. They cut open all fruit and even cracked

the kernels, under the pretence that they might contain some secret communication. They removed the knives and forks immediately after each meal, and even feared lest the ladies' needles should prove instruments of suicide.

It was difficult for the King to lay aside his habitual good nature, though his easy, calm behaviour only excited the ridicule of his jailers—never their pity—and they always treated him with scorn and contempt. They rarely abused the Queen, whose quiet reserve more frequently kept her persecutors at a distance.

One morning as Louis was dressing two inspectors came in to search his pockets. They seated themselves, while they obliged the late King to remain standing, and took from him several little things, amongst others a gold knife, with which he cleaned his teeth.

On the night of August 24th, between twelve and one o'clock, two jailers hastily entered his room and took away his sword. On another occasion a newspaper was brought to him with an "interesting article" for him to read. He scanned it; it was about an artilleryman, who asked for the tyrant's head as a cannon ball.

A word spoken in a low voice was interpreted into a conspiracy, and a stolen tear into hatred of the people. A movement of the hand was a threat, and a smile meant treason. Silence was called arrogance, and politeness an attempt to curry favour. The Royal Family had to suppress every sign of pleasure, as well as of sorrow.

Louis' fervent Christian belief now became a source of strength and patience to him. He who had been so shy and vacillating among courtiers and flatterers, and had shown himself so weak when in power, recovered his dignity just as his enemies thought they had succeeded in crushing it.

His easy and simple good nature, which had so irritated his wife, shone forth as considerate gentleness in his imprisonment.

Marie Antoinette had felt only a cool friendship for the powerful monarch; but her devotion to her persecuted husband was deep and sincere, and she was amazed at the patience and firmness which he now developed, and bitterly reproached herself that in the height of her prosperity she had allowed herself to

be carried away by her love of excitement and pleasure, and to treat him with indifference.

Louis was callous to his privations as long as they only affected himself, but he acutely felt the contrast between the luxury in which he had formerly seen his wife and sister, and the need and poverty in which they now were.

He was looking one day at Elisabeth while she was busy repairing the Queen's gown. Her scissors had been taken from her and she was obliged to bite her thread.

"Sister," he said, "what a contrast, you wanted for nothing in that pretty house at Montreuil."

"Oh, brother," answered Elisabeth, "can I want for anything while I am a sharer in your misfortunes?"

Another time he saw the Queen sweeping the floor.

"What an occupation for a Queen of France!" he exclaimed. "What would they say in Vienna if they could see you? Who could have foreseen when I asked you to share my lot that I should cause you to sink so low?"

"Do you call it nothing to be the wife of the best and most persecuted of men?" asked Marie Antoinette. "Is not misfortune like ours the most exalted greatness possible?"

The King took her hand and his eyes were filled with tears.

The Royal Family gathered round the table in the evening, when the Queen and Princess read aloud, or they sewed and chatted.

The children often played in the ante-room, when Cléry looked after the Dauphin, and Elisabeth sometimes joined them for a while. The Princess and the valet sat each with a book; but they contrived to exchange a few words under cover of the noise in the jailer's room.

Marie Antoinette always put her son to bed, and when she had undressed him and kissed him she made him say his prayer in a whisper, so that the men should not hear him. The Queen had composed it for him, and it has been preserved and communicated by her daughter.

"Almighty God! I love Thee, Who hast created and redeemed me. Preserve the life of my father and my family. Protect us from our enemies. Give to my mother, to my aunt, and my sister the strength that they need to endure their afflictions!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Princesse de Lamballe Murdered.

Two days after the fall of the Monarchy the German troops had crossed the frontier, and the French soldiers, who should have protected their country, had fled on the first approach of the enemy.

August 20th the allied forces began to attack the fortress of Longwy, which capitulated three days later, and on September 2nd Verdun fell into the hands of the besiegers.

The news created intense alarm, and the guard in the Temple believed that the foreigners would soon be in Paris.

One of the jailers rushed up to the King and exclaimed:—

"If the Germans come I will kill you!"

Louis looked at him with amazement, mingled with compassion.

The Dauphin burst into tears and ran away terrified. His sister followed him, and the Queen called him, but he would not listen.

"I had the greatest difficulty to comfort him," Marie Thérèse relates; "he seemed to see my father killed already."

After such scenes Marie Antoinette talked to her children of the forgiveness which all must use; she begged them to forget offences, and reminded them that they must not confound the French people with crowds of madmen, carried away by the effects of the Revolution.

The superiority of the invaders was really not so great as the Parisians believed.

September 29th the King of Prussia felt himself warranted in withdrawing his troops without having effected his object, and the two fortresses fell again into the hands of the French.

On August 5th Robespierre had forced the Assembly to appoint a special tribunal with power to judge all traitors, and on the

occasion of the fall of Longwy, the 28th of the same month, Danton declared that in view of the existing alarming circumstances all suspected persons should be imprisoned.

The Assembly signified their assent, and Paris was given over to the cruel arbitrariness of the Reign of Terror.

August 29th crowds of armed men began to perambulate the city. They barricaded the streets, searched the houses, and dragged at least 3000 men and women to prison. It is true that a certain number of these were released, but a horrible death was in reserve for the remainder.

A wholesale human slaughter began on the afternoon of September 2nd. The revolutionary authorities had hired 200 murderers from the lowest dregs of the people, who went the round of the prisons in organized detachments, and with brutal ferocity carried out their warrants on those whom the Commune had condemned.

The Princesse de Lamballe, with Madame and Mademoiselle de Tourzel, had been confined in "La Force" after they were dragged from the Temple. The Queen's repeated and eager questions had been met with the assurance that not the least danger threatened her friend.

"What could they accuse her of?" the Queen said to comfort herself. "She has never taken any part in politics. She can be accused of nothing but her devotion to me." And yet she was full of anxiety about the Princess.

Madame de Lamballe had escaped the "blood-bath" of the first day. She had passed the night of the 2nd September in repeated convulsions and fainting fits, and in her moments of consciousness had heard the shrieks of the dying in the rooms above her own.

The noise and screeching outside made her shiver with terror. Although she was prepared for death she shrank as she felt its near approach, and her nerves quivered at the thought that she might be torn to pieces by the infuriated mob.

At one moment she sprang out of bed and knelt on the hard floor to cry to God in these death-agonies, and in the next she tried to gain strength in the thought of the Queen, for whose sake she had sacrificed her happiness and her peace.

Under pretence of removing her to the "Abbaye" the jailers came in to conduct her before the tribunal.

"Prison is prison," she observed. "I prefer to remain in La Force. I am as well off here as anywhere else."

But she was told that she must obey. She put on her gown, and leaning on her jailer's arm for support dragged herself down the staircase.

Here she found the air reeking with wine, blood, and tobacco, while suppressed wailing or the death-rattle met her ear at every step. She could hardly hold herself upright, and seemed to lose consciousness of what was going on.

Half dead she reached the court, and was led up to a table covered with swords, pistols, papers, bottles, and glasses.

"Who are you?" asked the judge.

And then she realized all.

"Marie Thérèse Louise de Savoie-Carignan, Princesse de Lamballe," she replied.

"What office did you hold at court? Do you know anything about the conspiracy in the palace?"

"I never heard of anything of the kind."

"Swear that you love liberty. Swear that you hate the King, the Queen, and the Monarchy."

"I swear to the first. I cannot possibly swear to the second, for there is no hatred in my heart."

"Swear all the same," said the judge, who wished to rescue her; "if you do not swear you must die."

She bowed her head, pressed her lips together, and was silent.

"Then go," said the judge, "and when you get outside shout 'Vive la nation!'"

The Duc de Penthièvre, who was living quietly on his estate, protected by the love of his people, was by no means ignorant of the dangers which threatened his daughter-in-law. He had sent his most trusty servants to Paris, and entrusted them with enormous sums of money with orders to purchase the life and liberty of the Princess. His efforts appeared likely to succeed. Several accounts concur in stating that they did not mean to kill the Princess, and that both among executioners and judges there were some who wished to save her.*

Two soldiers took her by the arm and led her out of the hall.

* Madame de Tourzel and her daughter escaped this same day.

She fainted again when she saw the corpses and pools of blood outside.

But the men dragged her forward over piles of dead and dying.

A drunken man stuck his lance through her hair in pure wantonness, then he tore off her cap with his sword, and a letter from the Queen which she had hidden underneath fell to the ground.

The man had cut her forehead and the blood trickled down her cheeks.

The Princess struggled to stand upright, and the two soldiers, who apparently wished to save her, dragged her patiently further.

But the crowd had seen the blood and threw themselves upon her, literally boring her through with their spears and sabres. They seized her by the hair and severed her head from her body with a butcher's knife. Her clothes were torn off, and even the corpse was subjected to indignities and mutilation.

The head was stuck upon a pole and served as a standard for a flock of screaming children, bloodthirsty men, and drunken women, who followed it to a public-house. Here it was laid on the bar in the midst of half-empty bottles, and all present were called upon to empty a glass to the dead. Then these men of blood went on their way, still carrying the head and with ever-increasing throngs at their heels, till they came to the Place de la Bastille, where they entered the shop of a barber, who curled and powdered the hair.

"Hurrah!" shrieked the mob when the head was shown to them. "Antoinette will recognize her friend now!"

They carried it to the gate of the Temple in order to frighten the Queen, followed by crowds, who forced their way into the prison yard under the windows of the royal pair.

Men, women, and children yelled revolutionary songs, shouted or shrieked the words "Austrian! Lamballe!" again and again, overpowering all other invectives.

The workpeople in the Tower joined the masses, all craving to witness the sorrows of the Royal Family.

"If the Austrian will not show herself we will go up and force her to kiss Lamballe's head," screamed some in the throng.

The Princess's long, light curls flowed round her ghastly blood-

stained face, and the man who was carrying the head clambered up the wall to put it as closely as possible to the window of Marie Antoinette's room.

The linen she had worn, which was black with filth and blood, was hoisted upon the point of another lance, and her dripping heart was dangling from a sabre. The man who carried this last trophy took it to the cook of the Temple and asked him to roast it, but told him to take it first to Marie Antoinette and enjoy the expression of her face when she caught sight of it.

The Royal Family had just risen from table, and Cléry had gone to Tison to have his dinner with him as usual.

Madame Tison suddenly uttered a shriek and fainted; she had seen the ghastly head from where she was sitting.

Cléry got up and with a scared face hurried to the Royal Family.

"Why do you not go down to your dinner?" the Queen asked.

"Madame, I do not feel well," he replied.

Several officials rushed into the room, and the guard on duty closed the door, went to the window, and drew the curtains in front of it.

"What is the meaning of this terrible noise?" asked the Queen.

A National Guard answered brutally, "As you wish to know, the crowd are anxious to show you Lamballe's head. I advise you to look at it if you do not wish them to force their way in here."

Marie Antoinette sank on to the floor fainting.

Her daughter relates that this was the only time during her imprisonment that the Queen's self-possession forsook her.

When she regained consciousness she threw herself on her knees and passed the night in prayer and moaning.

CHAPTER XLV.

The Royal Family Removed to the Tower of the Temple—Louis XVI. Arraigned before the Bar of the Convention.

THE Republic was proclaimed in France on September 21st, 1792.

The prisoners received the news with perfect composure.

"I hope," said Louis, "that Frenchmen will find the happiness under this new government that I had hoped to procure them."

The following day six magistrates noisily forced their way in, and a decree was read aloud ordering that Louis should be separated from his family and removed to the larger Tower.

The Queen, the Princess Elisabeth, and his children all clung to him. They covered his hands with kisses and tears, while they vainly entreated to be allowed to sorrow with him.

The officials were overcome, but they dared not disobey orders.

They led the King away to the larger Tower, where a bed, a table, and a couple of shabby chairs were the only furniture of his room.

The following morning Louis begged one of the jailers to bring him news of his wife and children. The man, who was less harsh than his colleagues, consulted with them, and at length induced them to go with him to the Queen.

Marie Antoinette had passed a sorrowful night. Her blanched lips, her eyes red from weeping, and the persistency with which she had refused to touch her breakfast, as she swore that she would die of hunger if they continued to separate her from the King—all moved and troubled the jailers.

"Well," said one of them at last, "let them dine together to-day. The Commune can settle further arrangements to-morrow."

The Queen's despair gave way to the liveliest delight; she

embraced her children, and told them to show gratitude to the men, and to thank God that they were permitted to see their father again.

Even Simon, who was present, was overcome.

"These women almost make me shed tears," he growled.

But the next moment he turned brusquely to the Queen.

"You did not weep on the 10th of August," he said.

"The people are greatly mistaken with reference to our feelings," answered Marie Antoinette.

That dinner was a fête, and Louis was never tired of pressing the hands of his dear ones. The ladies were allowed to go to the large Tower to see the King's room, as well as those that were being prepared for their own reception. So the day which had begun in such despair ended almost in joy and delight.

Three weeks later Marie Antoinette, the princesses, and Charles Louis were also transferred to the larger Tower.

They had rejoiced when they heard of the change, because they would then be near the King; but they were mistaken if they thought of compassion from the Commune, whose hatred towards Marie Antoinette had not been diminished during the fighting against her country.

The care which she bestowed on her son, the gratitude with which he rewarded her, his constant caresses, were her solace in her affliction, and they grudged her this last satisfaction without warning; Charles Louis was taken from his mother and put with his father.

The Queen hoped for a time that the separation was only a threat, and that the child would be brought back to her when she was settled in the other rooms. But when the jailers led her to the third storey, and left her son on the lower floor, she had to grasp that it was in earnest.

The large Tower was a far darker and a more strictly guarded prison than the little one had been. At the foot of the staircase there were two double doors—one of oak, the other of iron; and an ante-room, where the men on duty passed their days and nights, was close by. The change of residence made but slight difference in their daily lives. They dined with the King, and although the boy lived with his father, the Queen and the

princesses were allowed to be with him during their walks in the courtyard.

The insults to which the prisoners had been exposed in the little Tower did not cease on their removal to the larger one. But all depended on the whim of the jailers.

The inspectors sometimes made the most extraordinary investigations.

One of them even had some fish bones and macaroni broken to bits because he suspected that they might be the vehicle for some communication.

Under the pretext that it might contain poison, one of them told the valet Cléry to drink some of the soapy lather which he used when shaving the King.

One day a jailer came up to the Queen and princesses, and said:—

"I bring you good news, ladies, numbers of those faithless emigrants have been taken and killed. If you love your country you will be glad."

Marie Antoinette did not reply, nor even betray by the faintest sign that she had heard what he said.

One after another all the members of the Royal Family became ill and unable to leave their beds, owing to the dampness of the walls. The Queen, Elisabeth, and the children recovered quickly, but the King's indisposition was of longer continuance, and caused anxiety.

The leaders of the Revolution began to fear that death would be beforehand, and rob them of the spoil they were hankering after; so they sent for Louis' former physician, and desired him to examine his condition.

Le Monnier burst into tears when he saw his old master. He refused to behave differently to the prisoner in the Temple than he had done to the King in Versailles, and was consequently abused by the jailers as an "abominable aristocrat and base flatterer."

Marie Antoinette nursed her husband with unwearied tenderness, and the King gradually recovered.

Then Cléry became ill. The Queen and the princesses went to see him every day, and Louis attended to his faithful servant.

After an apparent forgetfulness of the Royal Family for some time, the Commune resolved on November 1st to send some commissioners to the Tower to examine into their state.

Drouet, the postmaster's son, whom we have already mentioned as hindering the flight of the Royal Family, was foreman of the commission.

Marie Antoinette recognized him instantly.

He bowed with embarrassment, and enquired if there was anything she had to complain of.

The Queen remained silent. Drouet repeated his question, but she did not deign to reply.

After he had left she sat buried in thought. Her daughter kissed her hands and tried to dispel the gloomy forebodings which filled her mind, but her mother would not be comforted.

"Why has that man from Varennes come to us again?" asked Charles Louis. "Was it perhaps because to-morrow is All Souls' Day?"

The 2nd November was also the Queen's birthday.

On the 30th, Robespierre declared that sentence of death on the King was the only means of restoring quiet in France.

Cléry, who kept up a certain intercourse with the outer world, felt convinced that his master would now be perfectly isolated from his family, and that he would be formally accused.

He communicated his suspicions to the King, who prepared his wife for the worst.

Acting on the suggestion of Pétion, it was agreed on December 3rd that Louis should be judged by the Convention, and three days later a jury of twenty-one men was selected to frame a charge against him.

On the 11th he was to be placed at the bar of the Convention.

The day broke amid noise and confusion, and several regiments marched to the square in front of the Temple to the loud beat of drums.

The Royal Family had just breakfasted. The watchful suspicion of their jailers prevented any possibility of Louis and Marie Antoinette exchanging a sign or a look that could express their uneasiness.

Though full of anxiety about the noise which reached their

ears, they behaved before their guard as if they had no idea of its probable cause.

The ladies returned to their own apartments and the King sat down to read.

Two jailers came in soon afterwards to take the Dauphin to the Queen.

Louis pressed his son to his heart, for the thought of losing him filled him with poignant anguish.

Charles Louis did not understand his father's emotion, and could not share his pain. He loved his mother above all others, and the news that he was now to remain always with her made him happy and content.

Two hours later a step on the stairs again roused the attention of the King. Chambon—the present Mayor of Paris—with Santerre, Chaumette, and Colombeau, explained that they had come to conduct him to his trial. Louis listened to the reading of the document with which they were furnished, and then silently took his place in the coach. The rain was beating against the window-panes, and the streets re-echoed with the words:—

"The blood of the tyrant shall flow at our feet!"

As soon as the King had entered the court the bill of indictment was read. He was sitting opposite to the President, in the same seat from which he had accepted the new constitution of the realm.

He passively replied to every question that was put to him; but on leaving the bar he demanded to have legal counsel, which was not refused.

He returned to the Temple at half-past six, with his thoughts full of his family. He begged for permission to see the Queen, but the request was denied him.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The King is Condemned to Death.

THE Queen and the princesses had passed the day in an agony of suspense. When the news reached them that the King was gone his wife cast herself on her knees, and lay for hours in earnest prayer to God.

At last she rose and paced the floor up and down, wringing her hands, and going from one to another, talking to the jailers, and embracing her children and sister-in-law.

When she was sure that the King had returned from the Convention she entreated to be allowed to see him, but she did not even obtain a reply to her request. Worn out with sorrow and anxiety the poor Queen had no more power to weep. She put the Dauphin into her own bed, and spent the whole night walking up and down in dumb despair.

In the morning she renewed her entreaties to be permitted to speak to her husband, and to read in the newspapers the account of his trial. Finally, she implored that the children might go to their father.

This last favour was granted, but only under the condition that Charles Louis and Marie Thérèse should be separated from their mother; but the King would not consent to accept this sacrifice from his wife.

He passed six long weeks apart from his family, with just one storey between him and those whom he loved so dearly, who were suffering agonies on his account, and yet were not permitted to stretch out a helping hand to support him in his need.

But, thanks to Cléry's devotion, they heard news of the King from time to time.

A window in Princess Elisabeth's bedroom looked out into a

passage, opening out of which was the valet's room. Cléry made use of the moments when the men on guard were engrossed with their cards to fasten fine threads to this window, then he hid tiny letters in woollen rags, which he fastened to the threads for the Princess to pull up.

Louis had expressed the wish that the barristers Target and Tronchet should undertake his defence.

The former refused to accept the commission, but Tronchet responded to the King's desire, while the aged Malesherbes hastened to the Convention, and begged for the honour of defending the man who had formerly been his master.

The Convention gave their consent, and Louis received his former Minister with emotion and gratitude.

The fallen monarch looked less for an advocate than for a friend in his old counsellor, one in whom he could confide, to whom he could pour out all the deep sorrows of his life.

In the lonely prison cell, as well as at the bar, Malesherbes treated the King with the deepest respect. But it roused the anger of the judges to hear the titles "Sire" and "Your Majesty" in their presence.

"What gives you the temerity to utter words that the Convention has forbidden?" asked one of them.

"Contempt for you and for life," replied Malesherbes.

This is not the place to go into further details concerning this painful trial, which is a matter of universal history.

Louis never lost his peace of mind. Resigned to everything that concerned himself personally, he was only overcome by emotion when he spoke of his family. He wept when he thought of his sister, whose whole life had been one of sacrifice and devotion, and when he thought of his wife and children who were so slandered and persecuted.

"I must speak to you about one thing that grieves me to the heart, the injustice of the people towards the Queen," he said to Malesherbes. "If Frenchmen only knew her worth, and how sanctified she has become through adversity, they would love her. But our enemies have sown and encouraged slander against her, and have striven to change the love that was once felt for her into the most bitter hatred."

The thought of his wife was the only thing that crushed him.

"The rebels are doing their best to asperse and sully the reputation of the Queen in order to bring about her condemnation," he said. "Yes, her death is already determined! If she were spared they would be afraid she would avenge me. Unhappy Queen! Her union with me promised her a throne, but what are her prospects to-day?"

Malesherbes still hoped that the Convention would be content either to exile the King, or to reprieve him at the last moment.

Tronchet and he obtained permission to take a younger counsel, de Sèze, to help them plead, though Louis thought it useless to fight for a life which, in thought, he had already offered as a sacrifice.

"We are doing Penelope's work," he said. "In a very short time our enemies will have undone it. I have no more faith in men. My hope is in God alone."

On December 24th de Sèze brought the defence which he intended to read in court.

Louis pushed it gently away.

"I do not hope to be able to convince my judges," he said, "and I do not wish to claim their pity."

On Christmas Day he wrote his will, which is full of thoughts of peace, reconciliation, love to his country, and Christian resignation.

He says, "I pray with my whole heart that God in His mercy will look down upon my wife, my children, and my sister, who have shared my sorrows for so long. I pray that they may be supported by His grace when I am gone, and as long as they remain in this miserable world. . . .

"I commend my children to the guardianship of my wife, whose motherly kindness towards them I have never distrusted. I especially enjoin upon her the duty of bringing them up as good Christians and conscientious citizens. In the event of their being called upon to occupy an exalted position in the world, I further entreat her to guide them to consider it only as a transient and dangerous advantage, and to turn their thoughts towards the true and lasting honours of eternity.

"I beg my wife to forgive all the sorrow to which she has been

subjected through my fault, as well as the trouble which I have caused her in our union; just as she on her part may be perfectly convinced that I bear her no ill-will, if she should ever reproach herself with reference to me.

"I earnestly entreat my children not to forget what they owe to God, which is their first duty. I further conjure them to remain united, to be obedient to their mother, and to show gratitude to her for all the care and trouble she takes on their account. I ask them to look upon my sister as their second mother. . . ."

On St. Stephen's Day Louis and his counsel appeared at the bar of the Convention, where de Sèze defended the King with zeal and eloquence amid repeated murmurs of displeasure from the public, and ominous shrugs of the shoulder from the members of the court.

When he had finished Louis said calmly and deliberately:—

"I am probably speaking to you for the last time, and I declare that my conscience in no wise reproaches me, and that my counsel have only told you what is strictly true."

He further declared that he had never feared the light of day upon any of his actions, and that he especially disclaimed the intention imputed to him of wishing to shed the blood of his subjects, the very thought of which had caused him pain.

About five o'clock in the afternoon he returned to the prison as quiet and composed as when he had left it.

As he crossed the threshold he looked sadly up at the window, behind which his family were confined; and his first act on entering his cell was to write to his wife.

The Queen received the eagerly expected lines by means of the threads fastened to the Princess Elisabeth's window.

The following morning de Sèze came with several copies of his defence of the King, and one of the jailers, named Vincent, secretly brought one of them up to the Queen.

Marie Antoinette read it quickly, but attentively. She had not a ray of hope, and wrote with a firm hand on the fly-leaf of the speech:—

"Oportet unum mori pro populo."

This identical copy is still preserved in one of the public libraries in France.

Early on the morning of January 1st Cléry went into the King, who held out his hand to his trusty servant. Cléry shed tears as he stammered something like wishes for the coming year.

Louis begged one of the jailers to go and enquire after the health of his family, and convey his greetings to them on the occasion of the New Year.

His voice betrayed such despair that the man was overcome, and said to Cléry:—

"Why does not the King ask for permission to see his family? They cannot refuse his request now."

The valet repeated what the man had said, and assured his master that the Convention would no longer put any obstacle in the way of a meeting with his dear ones.

"In a few days' time this comfort will not be denied me," Louis replied. "We will wait."

Even now not a court in Europe believed in the possibility of his execution.

Fersen wrote to the Swedish Regent at the end of November:— "We have received no fresh news from Paris. We only know that the trial of the King has begun, and opinions seem to be equally divided. Fauchet argues that Louis has been sufficiently punished already with all that he has gone through, and would like to let him go. Others wish him to be sentenced to death, but reprieved at the last moment. There is every reason to believe that he will be condemned, but that the people will spare him, and provide a sum of money for himself and his family. In the meantime it is not known whether he is to remain a captive or if he is to be allowed to live where he likes."

But events were soon to contradict these optimistic surmises. The Girondists wished to save the life of the King, and urged an appeal to the people. Vergniaud, a powerful advocate, was selected as the exponent of their views. He left the question of the King's guilt or innocence undetermined, though he set forth in a thrilling speech the misery that his execution would bring about, not only in France but in Europe generally. But reasonable and eloquent words had lost their influence in the

land. The dregs of the Parisians threatened the Convention itself with destruction in case they dared to oppose the people's thirst for revenge.

Early on the morning of January 15th voting began, under Vergniaud as President.

To the first question, whether the King was guilty of "conspiring against liberty," 683 deputies voted "Yes." The appeal to the country was rejected by a majority of 141 votes, and the question as to the nature of his punishment was adjourned to the following day.

Voting began at half-past seven in the evening of the 16th, and continued till daybreak.

The hall was but dimly lighted, and the tribune was crowded with people, laughing and chattering, making remarks on the members' or their own individual opinions, then betting on how they would vote. Elegantly dressed women peeled oranges and ate them with relish. Girls of ill-fame were treated to lemonade and ices, while they played cards and laid wagers on the life or death of the King. The mob in the galleries screamed themselves hoarse in their clamour for his execution, and hooted and threatened every member who dared to speak of mercy, while they applauded those who stoutly demanded "Death."

Yet out of the 721 who were present, only 361 voted for immediate execution, 39 were against capital punishment at all, and 321 were in favour of some milder sentence.

Among those who voted for his death was Philippe Egalité, as he now called himself.

But there were still a few who begged for mercy, even when the voting was over, among them the invalid deputy Duchâtel, who was carried into the Convention wrapped in blankets, and raised his voice against the sentence of death in spite of the threats that were hurled at him.

Louis was less concerned about any sentence that men could pass than he was about the judgment that he must await from his God.

The result of the voting was made known to him by his three advocates January 18th, and Malesherbes threw himself at his feet, unable to articulate a word.

The King understood him, and received the news without flinching as he raised his old counsellor and pressed him to his heart.

"I expected that which your tears announce to me," he said. "If you love me do not be grieved, nor grudge me the only thing that is left to me. . . . May my blood save the people from the horrors which I fear for them."

He asked for further particulars, and how the Duc d'Orléans had voted.

Malesherbes told him.

"Alas!" exclaimed Louis, "he causes me more pain than all the others."

CHAPTER XLVII.

Louis XVI. takes Leave of His Family—His Execution.

Marie Antoinette did not know that Louis XVI. was sentenced to death until the day before his execution. It was on Sunday, January 20th, that the newsvendors shouted the fact under her very window.

In the evening she had permission to go down to her husband to bid him farewell.

Abbé Edgeworth de Firmont, who had formerly been Princess Elisabeth's confessor, was summoned to her brother at her suggestion.

He came, and trembling with emotion knelt before the King.

"I am no longer accustomed that men should kneel to me," said Louis, assisting him to rise.

"Sire," he added, "we are met for a great task, which will engage all our thoughts; for what else can be compared with it?"

Alone with the Abbé he prepared himself for death, confessed, and talked to him of the life to come.

A jailer then announced that his family would soon be with him.

The King rose in great agitation, went into the other room, and told Cléry to put some water on the table for the use of the Queen. Then he begged the Abbé to remain where he was as long as the interview lasted.

The condemned King paced up and down and tried to control his impatience, but his looks, incessantly directed towards the door, betrayed his emotion and anxiety.

At last there were sounds of the approach of his dear ones.

Marie Antoinette entered first, holding her son by the hand, and followed by his daughter and sister.

They all embraced him sobbing. The Dauphin climbed up on to his father's knee and clasped him tightly with his little arms. Elisabeth and Marie Thérèse bent over him and laid their heads on his shoulder, while the poor Queen clung to him with passionate tenderness.

For half an hour they could not speak. Nothing but a single wail of sorrow was heard from these five mourners, who could not let each other go. And from time to time their heart-rending sobs and bitter weeping were even heard in the neighbouring streets.

It was the King who spoke at last. He exhorted his son to forget all insults, to forgive those who were sending his father to the scaffold, to honour religion, and to be obedient to his God.

And in order to give more emphasis to his words he said to him:—

"My son! you have heard all that I have said to you. But as an oath is more sacred than mere words, swear, as you raise your hand, that you will fulfil your father's last wish!"

"My brother obeyed and burst into tears," relates his sister—the only one of the unfortunate party that regained liberty, and was able to record these details.

The painful farewell lasted nearly two hours. And as witnesses of all these tears, of this sorrow and anguish, four jailers, with their hats on, stood behind the grated door and watched.

The King pressed his daughter to his heart, blessed her, and covered her with kisses, but the poor child fainted away.

Then he whispered in the Queen's ear a painful, tender farewell. He exonerated his enemies, spoke of his trial, and called on them all to be courageous, while he himself struggled hard to maintain his composure.

Marie Antoinette wished to pass the night with her husband, but he would not hear of it. He craved for a quiet hour in which to prepare himself for death, though he yielded to her entreaties to be allowed to see him in the morning.

But when his family had left he begged the jailers not to let him see them again; another farewell would have occasioned him even still more poignant anguish.

As she was passing through the ante-room the Queen noticed the men who were standing there, and exclaimed passionately:—

"You are all scoundrels together!" Once again in their own rooms they gave vent to their bitter sorrow, sobs and crying being heard through the closed doors.

"My son," said Marie Antoinette to Charles Louis, "promise me that you will never think of avenging your father's death!"

Worn out with the agitation of the day she had no power to undress, but threw herself on her bed in utter exhaustion.

"We seemed to hear her shivering all through the night with cold and sorrow," relates Marie Thérèse.

A jailer came in to them early the following morning, and the Queen thought it was to fetch her for the promised last interview with the King.

She was disappointed, he had only come to fetch a prayer-book for him. But still she hoped, and listened with heart-rending agony to every sound on the stairs.

It was useless.

Louis had gone to bed and slept for some hours. He rose at five, and dressed alone. Then he heard Mass, and received the Holy Eucharist from Abbé Edgeworth.

Then he called Cléry to him, and said with a trembling voice:—

"Give this to the Queen, it is the wedding-ring she gave me. Tell her that it grieves me to part with it. . . . Tell the Queen, my dear sister, and my children that I had promised to see them this morning, but I will spare them the cruel meeting. God knows how it pains me to go without one last embrace."

He dried his eyes, and added in a voice that cut Cléry to the heart:—

"I beg you to bid them farewell."

* * * * * *

The departure of the former King of France from the Tuileries is announced by beat of drums.

All the shops are closed, and every blind is drawn down. "Cannons bristle," and 80,000 armed men line the route to the scaffold. An immense number of handbills, conjuring the people to rescue the King, have been circulated far and wide during the

last few days. "Les Dames de la Halle," who had once been so fond of Louis and his family, have become a powerful element under the Revolution, and rich, high-born ladies do not shrink from seeking them to entreat them to implore for mercy on the condemned monarch.

It is no secret that the young men of the capital mean to rise; but the authorities are prepared to prevent them.

They have issued orders that all are to appear at a certain hour at a given spot, within their own quarter of the city. Those who are not there are to be considered rebels, and their fathers responsible for their actions.

Finally, the police have forbidden the saleswomen to go to the markets until after the execution has taken place.

The whole population capable of handling a sword is under arms.

The day is dark, with a dense fog shrouding the city.

Louis takes his seat in the corner of the coach and remains in perfect silence. His confessor sits by his side, and two gendarmes are opposite to them.

The Abbé hands him a prayer-book, which the King takes with evident gratitude, as he asks the priest to point out such psalms as are suitable for the solemn hour. Edgeworth does so, and then Louis and he read the verses in a loud voice alternately.

The coach has reached the Porte St. Denis. A nobleman named Batz means to try and save the King. Like so many others he had left France when the Revolution first broke out, but had afterwards returned secretly, and kept himself hidden in the capital until now.

Danger was his element.

He had taken up his position on the high ground of the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle, from whence he could watch the procession.

Here he seeks in vain for some comrades who were to aid him in his project. The streets are empty, the houses closed, and through the icy cold fog he can discern nothing but solitude and desolation.

In despair at the desertion of his colleagues he feels that he cannot arrest the coach, which he hears coming nearer and nearer.

In the meantime two small groups have formed on the road by which the *cortège* must pass, one on the right, the other on the left side of the Boulevard, behind the serried ranks of armed men.

The Baron's hopes revive when he sees the group, small as it is, and perceives two young men making their way to join him. Followed by them and his friend Devaux he rushes, sword in hand, through the soldiers, standing four deep, and shouts again and again in a loud voice :—

"Here, Frenchmen! Here all who wish to rescue their King!"

But there is not one among that dense mass to respond to his appeal. Fear and suspicion reign supreme among all classes; everyone distrusts his neighbour and sees in him a spy.

The silence of death is over all. When Batz and his friend perceive the utter futility of their plan, they retreat as they again break through the ranks of the soldiers, who are dumb with surprise, and sign to the two groups to join them.

But in the meantime a mounted sentinel has signalled to the cavalry in reserve, who instantly spring forward. The two young men try to make their escape into a neighbouring house, but it is closed, and they are cut down on the threshold by the bayonets of the soldiers. Batz and his friend disappear among the crowd.

The coach passes on without delay, and the four occupants have seen and heard nothing.

Although fully aware of the solemnity of his office, the Abbé is not unmindful of what may occur on their way, as some young men had spoken to him on the previous day of their proposed plan. With really no belief in the possibility of success, he yet feels a feeble ray of hope.

The King's thoughts are no longer of this world. He does not even see the terrible preparations that have been made to stifle the least cry for mercy that might escape his lips. With calm resignation to the will of God he reads the prayers for the dying.

It is twenty minutes past ten. The King notices that the coach has stopped. He looks up, shuts his book, but keeps his finger in the place where he has been reading.

Turning to his confessor he says, "If I am not mistaken we have reached the spot."

The priest bows in silence. Louis reopens his book, and reads the last two verses of the psalm which he had not finished.

The executioners are waiting, and one of them opens the coach door. The two gendarmes prepare to alight, but the King stops them, and says in a commanding tone, as he lays his hand on Abbé Edgeworth's knee:—

"Gentlemen, I entrust the Abbé to your care. See that no harm happens to him after my death. I give you the charge to watch over him."

The men do not reply. The King is on the point of repeating his words still more emphatically, when one of them interrupts him:—

"Yes, yes, you need not be uneasy, we will look after him."

Louis gives his book to the priest and is the first to leave the coach. He turns towards the Tuileries, and then looks at the armed men.

Three executioners approach and attempt to undress him, but he pushes them powerfully back and prepares himself by loosening his collar and undoing his shirt to leave neck and shoulders free. This done he kneels down to receive the blessing of his confessor. Then rising quickly he places his foot on the lowest step of the scaffold. The executioners, who for a moment are bewildered by his proud bearing, stop him and seize his hands.

"What do you want?" asks the King, violently withdrawing them.

"To bind you," replies one of them.

"Bind me!" he shouts indignantly. "I will never consent to that; besides, it is unnecessary. I am sure of myself."

The men persist in their attempt.

"No, no!" repeats Louis. "Do all that is required of you, but do not bind me. Leave that alone."

The executioners continue to vociferate loudly, and seem on the point of calling for help to bind him forcibly. One moment more and the descendant of a long line of sovereigns will be exposed to an indignity which appears worse than the death that is awaiting him.

He seems to fear this and turns towards Abbé Edgeworth, looking fixedly at him as if to ask his counsel.

At first the priest is silent, but as the King continues his gaze he says, with tears in his eyes:—

"Sire, in this new dishonour I see but another point of resemblance between you and that God who will give you your reward."

Louis raised his eyes to heaven with an expression of indescribable agony.

"In truth," he said, "nothing less than the example of my Redeemer could induce me to submit to such humiliation."

Then, turning to the executioner, he adds:—

"Do your will. I will drink the cup to the dregs."

His hands are then secured with a handkerchief, and his hair falls under the scissors of the executioner.

"I hope that at last I may be allowed to speak," he says as he mounts the steep steps of the scaffold, leaning with his elbow on the arm of his confessor. The ascent seems to exhaust him, and the Abbé is afraid his courage will fail him; but as soon as he has reached the last step, the King crosses over to the other side of the platform with a firm tread, and in a voice like thunder shouts "Silence!"

The drums are hushed in a moment.

His voice is loud and clear enough to be heard far away as he says:—

"I die innocent of the crimes of which I am accused. I forgive all, and I pray God that the blood you are shedding may not come upon France. And you, unhappy people——"

"He shall not go on," shrieks a piercing voice from the crowd; and Santerre adds, "I have not brought you here to make a speech, but to die."

An officer on horseback with uplifted sword rides up and shouts "Tambours!" and the rolling of the drums drowns the voice.

At the same time encouraging shouts to the executioner are heard from the foot of the scaffold. The men rise to their work, seize the King, and lay him under the knife, which falls.

Abbé Edgeworth hears the thud and falls upon his knees.

The youngest of the executioners—he seems barely twenty—seizes the gory head which once wore the crown of France and walks with it round the platform. The blood drips on to the priest, who is prostrate in prayer on the lowest step of the scaffold. Deep silence reigns for one minute among the spectators, who are involuntarily seized with unspeakable horror.

But a voice is soon heard shrieking out "Vive la nation! Vive la République," and one after another takes up the words, until in a few minutes the air re-echoes with almost unanimous shouts.

The crowd disperses, and only the very worst dregs of the people remain on the Place and ascend the scaffold. Some wipe up the King's blood with their clothes, others smear it on their faces, and yet others dance like demons round the fatal spot.

One man hoists the King's coat on to the point of his lance, and screams to the howling, dancing mob:—

"Here are the tyrant's clothes." All that he wore is torn in pieces, and every rag is fought for to be kept as a souvenir of what they have seen.

A citizen, who has soaked his arm in Louis' blood, fills his hands with it, and sprinkles it in the faces of the spectators.

"Brothers!" he shouts, "we have been threatened that Capet's blood shall be on our heads—well, it is come! Louis Capet has many a time washed his hands in *our* blood."

But there are several who do not share the sentiments of this citizen.

One officer in Paris dies of sorrow when he hears that the King has been guillotined.

A bookseller loses his reason on the very day, and speaks of nothing but the execution of Louis.

A barber, well known as an ardent Royalist, cuts his throat with a razor.

Verginaud, who had voted for capital punishment, is attacked with fever, and tells one of his friends that wherever he turns he sees the bleeding corpse of the King raise itself like a horrible spectre before his eyes; he sees his head, and seems to hear the words "accusation" and "forgiveness" murmured by the dead lips.

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Two hours after the execution the fog still lay thick over the city. Not a shop was opened. A gloomy silence reigned in the streets and public squares, interrupted at long intervals by some few who, with savage yells and unseemly dancing, were commemorating this historical event.

Towards noon a carriage was seen to draw up near the entrance to the churchyard of la Madeleine, accompanied by a detachment of gendarmes.

Crowds hastened after it and assembled round a newly-dug grave, in which was placed an open coffin containing the body of Louis Capet.

It was clothed in a shirt, a white waistcoat, grey silk breeches, and stockings of the same colour.

The back hair had been cut from the head, which was laid between the legs.

Some priests sang a psalm and repeated the usual formularies, while many of those who an hour earlier had applauded the execution of the King were now listening in devotional silence to the prayers that were being read for the repose of his soul.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Marie Antoinette as a Widow—Feeling Abroad on the King's Death—Fresh Plans for Escape—Toulan and Jarjayes.

THE joyful shouts of the populace announced to Marie Antoinette that she was a widow.

She shed but few tears, and after her son was put to bed she and her sister-in-law watched by his side.

"He is now exactly the same age as his brother was when he died," said the Queen. "Happy are those of our family who are gone! They were ignorant of the downfall of the house!"

It was half-past two in the morning when Tison and his wife appeared at the door on hearing voices in Marie Antoinette's bedroom.

"Be pitiful," said Elisabeth gently, "and let us weep in peace."

The Queen became seriously ill after Louis' execution, and her condition aroused grave fears for her life. She at first thanked God that she was likely to join her husband so soon, and wept with disappointment when the physician pronounced her out of danger.

Then she became more resigned, and realized that she had not yet drained her cup of sorrow. She repented of having wished to die, and said to the Princess Elisabeth:—

"I was committing a great sin against you, sister, and against my children when I longed to die; I am even more necessary to them now than in the days of our prosperity."

Louis was not regretted by his relations outside the Temple. His brothers even rejoiced to find themselves so much nearer to the throne, and the Comte de Provence hastened to assume the outward signs of power, and to cause himself to be proclaimed Regent during the minority of Louis XVII.

Count Fersen writes:—

"There are already several different parties in the ranks of Frenchmen, even if the name is only applied to the emigrants. Some acknowledge the Comte de Provence as their head, while others uphold the rights of the Dauphin. I am very much afraid that this diversity of opinion will prove the precursor of disastrous consequences. These princes are acting most foolishly."

But the behaviour of the clergy and the emigrants was neither wiser nor more dignified than that of the princes. Some ladies and gentlemen who, not so many years previously, had belonged to the intimate circle of the King and Queen, and upon whose fidelity and devotion they had both implicitly relied, appeared with cheerful faces in theatre and concert-room immediately after the receipt of the news that the King had been guillotined.

Faithful Fersen was most indignant at the indifference and carelessness which he encountered concerning the safety of the Queen. He was about the only one who seemed to realize that the hatred of the people would expose her to cruel persecution, which would result in bringing her too to the scaffold.

He was haunted day and night by the thought of her, and plans for her deliverance rushed through his excited brain so continually that they became merged into one tangled mass.

His letters reveal his uneasiness. One day he writes to Count Mercy, on the next to some other old friend. On the third day he confesses that the more he thinks of all that has occurred the more convinced he is that the very best service they can render the Queen is to do nothing.

Then he adds how terrible it is to him to be compelled to confine his zeal to helpless inactivity.

He changes his views again just as rapidly, and next proposes that the Emperor of Austria should openly and frankly demand the return of the Queen to her native land.

It seemed for a moment as if Austria would entertain the suggestion.

"As we did not believe it possible that the King of France would be murdered, perhaps we were not active enough in trying to prevent the fearful deed," Mercy wrote to the Comte de la Marck. "Let us at least strive to hinder such a fate to the

unfortunate Queen, who ought now to be the constant object of our solicitude."

But this plan, too, was speedily abandoned, for fear that it would not only be useless but even harmful.

Fersen asks:—

"Is it not possible that the interest in his aunt betrayed by the Emperor will give the Republicans an excuse for sentencing her too, as it will arouse the old hatred against Austria, and remind the nation that the Queen is a foreigner and an accomplice in the crimes of which they accused the King?"

"Would it not be better," he wrote (February 3rd, 1793), "to try and win over with money and promises such influential revolutionists as Lanclos, Santerre, and Dumouriez?"

A few months later Baron Breteuil received an intimation from the constitutionalists of France that they would prepare a decree of exile for the Queen and her children. For this they demanded the sum of six millions, to be handed over to them when the prisoners were in safety in some foreign land.

Breteuil begged the English statesman Pitt to help him to procure the six millions, but the Minister raised difficulties, and the request came to nothing.

Though the Queen, with but few exceptions, had only half-hearted friends outside France, she had, on the contrary, many warm but secret adherents in Paris.

Royalists were still to be met with who frequently wandered round the Temple Tower, longing to be of service to the captives.

Although Marie Antoinette was guarded exclusively by men who had been imbued with a most unfavourable impression of her character, many, even of these, were so touched by her calm resignation and dignity under suffering that a couple of them—Toulan and Lepître—would willingly have used their influence to save her life.

Under the disguise of harshness Lepître managed to give her a few details which she longed to know, relating to the death of Louis XVI.; and the memory of the King also became a bond of union between her and Toulan.

He was a sincere and enthusiastic Republican, but no advocate

of cruelty. He was at first indifferent to the persecutions which Marie Antoinette had to endure, and which, he was told, she well deserved. But later on, as he had the opportunity of watching her daily life, his heart became filled with compassion towards her. His harsh manner, which suited his reputation of an ardent Republican, his noisy hilarity, and his rough speech precluded the least suspicion that he could wish to help the prisoners.

The Queen was not misled by his behaviour; she read in his look that he was a friend. With a combination of gruffness, cunning, and coolness he revealed feelings that no one before had suspected, and confided to her his earnest wish to rescue her and her family.

Marie Antoinette begged him to communicate with a nobleman named Jarjayes, who had married one of her former ladies-in-waiting, and who, in spite of danger, had remained in Paris in the hope of being able to render some service to the royal house. Toulan went to him armed with the following letter from the Queen:—

"*February* 1*st*, 1793.

"You may rely upon the man who is seeking you on my behalf. I know his feelings, which have been constant for five months. Do not place any great confidence in the man's wife who is shut up with us (Madame Tison). I trust neither her nor her husband."

When Jarjayes heard that Toulan was a jailer in the Temple, and that he was willing to cope with any difficulty in order to rescue the Queen, he at once gave him his entire confidence.

The two men consulted together about what could be done to liberate the Royal Family.

The difficulty of removing so many persons from the prison was by no means slight, but a plan unequalled in boldness was devised by Toulan.

Jarjayes was to procure men's clothes to be worn by Marie Antoinette and the Princess Elisabeth. Toulan's comrade, Lepître, undertook to provide tri-coloured scarves, which the disguised ladies were to wear round their waists, and a pass, on showing which no hindrance would be offered to their exit.

They were to leave the Temple at night-fall, and the sentinels on duty would simply take them for inspectors returning from

their rounds. The task of taking the children out of the Tower presented far greater difficulties, and the flight of Charles Louis especially required the utmost caution. But even this was not considered by the plotters to be insuperable.

A man named Jacques was to have lamps and lanterns in readiness for them—it was his business to come to the Temple every morning and evening to clean and light those for general use. He was always punctual, always silent, and never entered into conversation with a soul.

Sometimes he brought with him his two children, who were about the same age and size as Charles Louis and Marie Thérèse.

The guard was always relieved at seven o'clock, and the fresh detachment of soldiers could not possibly know if Jacques and his accomplices had been there or not.

It was further arranged that one of Toulan's friends, named Ricard, should disguise himself as the lamp-cleaner, and show his pass at the gate when he arrived to finish his work begun—according to plan—by his children.

Toulan was to reprimand him for being unpunctual, and as soon as his work was done the Dauphin and his sister, disguised as his children, were to leave the prison holding his hand.

Toulan undertook to procure clothes for the children, and also to send Tison and his wife to sleep by means of drugged tobacco. Jarjayes was to be in readiness for the fugitives with three small carriages. The Queen, her son, and Jarjayes were to occupy the first, the Princess Elisabeth and Toulan the second, and Marie Thérèse and Ricard the third. Remembering the unhappy flight of two years ago, the Queen had this time insisted on the use of separate conveyances.

Supper was not brought up to the prisoners till between seven and eight o'clock, but still it was thought that they would have time to leave Paris and take the road to Normandy before their escape would be discovered.

The carrying out of the plan was fixed for March 8th, and the precautions that had been taken seemed to promise success.

Meanwhile the horror which had been aroused by the murder of the King had changed the attack of Austria and Prussia upon France into a general European war, and the inhabitants of Paris,

who had long been demoralized by hunger, idleness, and uneasiness caused by political events, became still more excited on hearing news from the seat of war. It was reported that the allied troops were approaching the capital, and that the French had fled from Aix-la-Chapelle, leaving the dead and wounded to their fate.

In view of the agitation caused by these reports the Commune gave orders that the city gates should be closed, and that the granting of passports was to be very closely restricted. The effect of these regulations was felt in the Temple, where the guard was strengthened, and the carrying out of any plan for flight became more and more difficult.

The prisoners were waiting with eager longing for the dawn of the day which might procure their liberty.

In the meantime a sign from Toulan made them understand that the attempt must be postponed for the present, and a few days later he whispered to them that the scheme must be abandoned, owing to the impossibility of rescuing them all.

Still the Queen, whose life was in the greatest danger, might have been helped; but the chief difficulty consisted in inducing her to leave her sister-in-law and her children behind in the Tower.

Toulan undertook to lead her out and accompany her to a spot where Jarjayes would join her, after having completed every arrangement that could ensure her safety.

Jarjayes, Lepître, and Toulan all tried to make the Queen understand that her remaining in the prison was synonymous with death to herself and great peril to her children—that it was her duty to accept the help of her friends to escape.

The entreaties of Toulan and Jarjayes, the representations of the Princess Elisabeth, the knowledge that her sister-in-law would conscientiously take a mother's place towards the children, finally overcame her objections. Preparations were made, and the day was approaching.

The evening before the meditated flight Marie Antoinette and Elisabeth were sitting together by the bedside of the Dauphin, overwhelmed with sorrow and anxiety.

"If only the child may be happy," said the mother.

"That he is sure to be, sister," answered Elisabeth, as she pointed to the gentle, open countenance of her brother's son.

"Youth is as short as joy," said the Queen with a sigh; "and happiness vanishes like all else."

She rose in great agitation and paced the floor.

"And you yourself, my good sister," she continued, "when and where shall I meet you again? No, it is impossible! It is impossible!"

Toulan arrived next day radiant at the thought that he was to rescue her.

The Queen went towards him.

"You will be angry with me," she said, "but I have been thinking it over. We are, indeed, encompassed with dangers here, but it is better to die than to act against one's conscience. I should die unhappy," she continued, "if I could not express to you my attachment."

"And I, Madame," answered Toulan, "should die unhappy if I could not assure you of my devotion."

Through the medium of this faithful man Jarjayes received the following lines from the Queen:—

"We have dreamed a lovely dream—that is all! But we have gained much, in that we have a fresh proof of your affection for us. My confidence in you is unbounded. You will always find me strong and courageous. But the interests of my son are my only guide, and great as would have been my happiness to leave these walls, I cannot consent to a separation from him. I recognize your devotion in all that you expressed yesterday, and you must feel assured that I grasp the truth of every argument you can put forward. But nothing could give me pleasure in the absence of my children, and it is this which prevents my feeling any regret."

She gratefully acknowledged the devotion which Toulan had shown, and entertained a hearty esteem for the gruff Republican, who had done so much.

She never spoke of him under any other name than "Fidèle," and she wrote to Jarjayes:—

"I should be very glad if you could do something for Toulan. He has proved himself so very kind to us, we ought to show our gratitude."

It was not long before he gave another proof of his fidelity.

He knew how eagerly she wished to possess the things that Louis had entrusted to Cléry before his execution, which had remained under lock and key in his cell, but which the valet had been strictly forbidden to give over to Marie Antoinette.

As yet nobody suspected Toulan of being friendly to the Queen, and he therefore easily gained access to the cell, and cleverly managed to get possession of the souvenirs of the King.

The Queen sobbed with emotion when he brought them to her, but she was so terrified lest Tison or his wife should find them out, that she determined to send the precious objects out of the country in order to secure their safety. Toulan took the King's ring, his seal, and a packet of his hair to Jarjayes, who undertook to see that they were delivered into the keeping of the Comte de Provence or the Comte d'Artois. But he did not leave at once, being detained by a faint hope that he might yet be able to rescue his Queen.

The position of affairs in Paris grew worse from day to day, and Barnave, who more than once had tried to mediate between the people and the royal pair, was thrown into prison.

Jarjayes began to think that he too might soon be deprived of his liberty. He was afraid that he would be summoned as a witness against Barnave, and he did not doubt that a meeting between them would prove disastrous to both, but especially to the Queen. He resolved to escape to Italy. Before his departure he received the following note from Marie Antoinette:—

"Farewell! If you have determined to leave, I think it is best that you should go at once. How I pity your poor wife! Toulan will tell you of the duty which I take upon myself of re-uniting you, if it is possible. How happy I should be if we can see each other again. I can never sufficiently appreciate all that you have done for me. Farewell! What a cruel word this is."

With the exception of the Queen's so-called "will," the above is the last letter from her hand bequeathed to posterity.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Dumouriez wishes to Restore the Monarchy—The Temple Searched—Illness of Charles Louis—Madame Tison becomes Insane—Baron Batz, Cortey, and Michonis.

We saw in the last chapter that Count Fersen was still seeking help for the Queen, whom he loved so steadfastly.

His own zeal was ardent, but we know that he stood almost alone, and that the Monarchists were divided into different parties. The foreign courts distrusted each other. Austria suspected Prussia, and Russia was displeased with Austria. We know, too, that the powerful Empress, Catherine II., had not the least sympathy with Marie Antoinette. Then Fersen was filled with prejudice against Count Mercy, as well as against his friend la Marck.

General Dumouriez, the old servant of the Monarchy, was at the head of a powerful army at the commencement of 1793. He declared that he was tired of the arbitrary proceedings of the revolutionary party. He was exasperated at the execution of the King and the cruelties that were continually being perpetrated in Paris. One of the General's confidants told Baron Breteuil that he even entertained the idea of restoring constitutional Monarchy to France under Louis XVII.

Breteuil again appealed to the English Government, which delayed and postponed, evidently unwilling to use any influence for the members of the royal house of France.

But all the same, Dumouriez determined to pursue his plan. On March 25th he had an interview at headquarters with Colonel Marck, who had been sent to him by the Commander of the Austrian army, the Prince of Saxe-Coburg.

After exposing the causes which had aroused his rancour against the Republican party, the General said:—

"It is impossible to remain any longer a passive spectator of so many horrors. I will break up this criminal government, restore a constitutional Monarchy, proclaim the Dauphin King of France, and save the life of the Queen."

A few days later an agreement was entered into between the German Princes and the French General.

The Prince of Saxe-Coburg consented to a cessation of hostilities, while Dumouriez turned his forces towards Paris in order to restore the Monarchy.

"A courier sent by the Vicomte de Caraman to Baron Breteuil has brought the tidings of the agreement come to between General Dumouriez and the Prince of Coburg," wrote Fersen with enthusiasm in his diary.

A little later on the Maréchal de Broglie sent him word that it was reported the General was on his way to Paris with 50,000 men, wearing the white cockade, and that the Prince of Coburg was ready on the frontier to support him with his army if it should be necessary.

Marie Antoinette's faithful knight pictured to himself the deliverance of the entire Royal Family.

He wrote a long letter to the Queen, and advised her with reference to her future policy.

"The position in which you will find yourself will be a very difficult one," the Swedish Count wrote April 8th, 1793. "You will be under great obligation to a bad man, who has only yielded to necessity, and who did not come forward as he ought to have done until he saw the impossibility of further delay. This is the limit of his service to you. But he is a capable man, and we must make use of him. You must appear to trust his so-called good intentions, and be frank in expressing your wishes."

Fersen advised Marie Antoinette to appeal to the Emperor of Austria, as well as to the Kings of Prussia and England. "You ought also," he adds, "to write to the Empress of Russia a dignified, independent letter, for I am not pleased with her behaviour. She has never replied to your last. Until you are literally recognized as Regent, and have formed your ministry, you must act as little as possible, and reward only with courtesies."

Intrigue was already at work. If Monarchy were restored,

who would become Regent? The question arose in the emigrants' camp, and was taken up by one court after another.

The Comte de Provence and his friends demanded that the government should be placed in his hands. Marie Antoinette's adherents naturally wished *her* to act. The confidant and secretary of Catherine II., Krapowitski, wrote in his diary that the Comte d'Artois was very much displeased with the junction of Dumouriez with the Prince of Coburg, because he was afraid that the Queen would be appointed Regent. Others, and not without good grounds, maintained that Dumouriez had not the least intention of working for Charles Louis de Bourbon, but for Philippe Egalité's son, who afterwards became King as Louis Philippe.

Fersen thought of going to Vienna to obviate disputes, and sent a message to the Comte de Provence to induce him to withdraw his demands. He, at the same time, requested the Archbishop d'Agout to take up his residence in Paris, in order to be near the Queen at the time of her liberation, and to remain as her counsellor in her new undertaking.

But all these illusions were to be but of short duration, and Frenchmen could not be induced to break a lance for their former royal house. Dumouriez certainly meant and tried to carry out his plan, but his soldiers would not obey; and, in fear for his life from his subordinates, he had to flee beyond the frontier.

The Royalist adherents abroad had felt themselves sure of victory, and had striven for the upper hand among themselves before the decisive venture had been made. Their fright was now as great as their former confidence had been unbounded, and with the flight of Dumouriez they looked upon the cause of Monarchy as lost.

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Instead of liberty, which Fersen and others had hoped for, for the Queen and her family, their imprisonment was rendered more and more painful, and the loneliness of their life in the Temple grew daily more oppressive.

Dumouriez's plans had roused the fears of the Republicans, and a price of 300,000 livres was put upon his head.

The royal prisoners were suspected of connivance in his plot. All gaps were carefully repaired, a high wall was built round the garden, and not a sound penetrated the Tower, which was closed as a grave.

Late one night, after the ladies had gone to bed, the public prosecutor, Hébert and his attendant entered the Queen's bedroom.

Marie Antoinette and the princesses rose and dressed, while a warrant ordering that their rooms were to be thoroughly searched was read to them.

The men ransacked the beds, and roughly roused Charles Louis from his sleep. His mother took him in her arms and tried to warm him, while he shivered with cold.

The search was not over till four o'clock in the morning. In the Queen's possession had been found a small red memorandum book, containing a few addresses and a broken pencil case.

A half stick of sealing-wax and a little powder were taken from the Princess Elisabeth, and a picture of a saint with a prayer for France from Marie Thérèse.

Exasperated that they had found nothing but these trifles, the men forced the Queen and the Princess to sign their search warrant. They refused at first, until Hébert threatened to take away Charles Louis and Marie Thérèse.

Three days later they came again, and this time they discovered a hat hidden in a box under the bed. Louis XVI. had worn it in the early days of his imprisonment, and his sister had kept it as a souvenir. This hat appeared to them very suspicious, and they seized it, in spite of Elisabeth's entreaties to be allowed to keep it.

But they had to declare in their report that they had found nothing suggestive of correspondence with the outer world, or of any intelligence with the inspectors of the Temple.

In spite of this statement, however, these officials were temporarily dismissed; while Toulan and Lepître, who had roused Tison's suspicions, were permanently discharged.

In thankful recognition of the service Toulan had rendered, the Queen had given him a gold box, the only gift that he would consent to receive. It was this souvenir, which he in-

cautiously displayed, that led to his dismissal. It was considered a proof that he had been in collusion with the prisoners, and he ended his days on the scaffold.

It was spring again. But the season no longer bore flowers for Marie Antoinette and her dear ones, the sun did not shine for them, and the future was without hope.

Both mental and physical sufferings had affected the health of the prisoners. Charles Louis became weaker day by day, and Marie Thérèse begged for permission to remove into her mother's room, in case either of them should be taken ill in the night.

The Queen had refused to go down into the garden after the execution of the King; she could not bear to pass the threshold which she had crossed in order to take her agonising farewell of him.

As she was afraid it would be hurtful to her children to be entirely without fresh air, she asked to be allowed to go up on to the flat roof of the Tower every day, and the permission was given.

When she and her son were returning from their walk one of the early days in May, the child complained of a pain in his side, and he was soon in a high fever. He could not lie down in bed, and seemed choked with a difficulty in breathing.

Marie Antoinette begged that Brunier, his former physician, might be summoned.

But the Republicans only laughed at the anxiety of the mother; they had other things to attend to than the health of a king's son.

The prison doctor was at last called in, and under his care Charles Louis became apparently better; but the fever returned at regular intervals, and the child never regained his strength.

About this same time Madame Tison began to show signs of insanity.

She had an only daughter whom she deeply loved, and, in consequence of the precautions which had been taken early in April to isolate the Temple, the Tisons had been compelled to part with their child.

Her removal had especially embittered her mother, who envied the Queen because she was allowed to keep her boy with her,

though at the same time she could not help admiring Marie Antoinette's patience. She observed to a nobleman:—

"If you had the chance of seeing the prisoners, you would agree with me that there does not exist a better or more estimable family on earth. Those who saw them in the Tuileries did not know them, only those who have observed them in the Temple as I have done can appreciate them."

After a while nothing would induce Madame Tison to go outside her door. She laughed and wept alone, as she declared that she was unworthy to approach the Queen. She talked unceasingly of her sins and the scaffold, and during the night she was tormented with such hideous dreams that her piercing shrieks awoke the prisoners.

One night a messenger was sent to fetch the daughter to comfort her mother, but she would not even speak to her child. She seemed to see and talk of nothing but prisoners and blood.

When she caught sight of the Queen she fell down at her feet, and cried:—

"Madame, I crave Your Majesty's pardon. I am miserable. It is I who have brought about your death and that of the Princess Elisabeth."

Marie Antoinette raised her from her knees, and endeavoured to comfort her with assurances of forgiveness.

But nothing availed to pacify the poor maniac, who grovelled on the floor screaming and talking volubly.

The royal ladies showed the sick woman kindness, which the former conduct of herself and her husband by no means deserved.

Tison was overcome by the goodness which was such a strong contrast to the ill-treatment that he and his wife had unscrupulously exercised in former days, and he too became a friend to the unfortunate Royal Family.

The 31st of May, which saw the execution of the Girondists and the accession to full power of Robespierre and Marat, was followed by fresh agitation within the walls of the Temple.

All plans for flight were abandoned and every hope was crushed, though there were still a few friends left who, thanks to Tison's altered views, were allowed access to the prison.

One of these was Baron Batz, whom we last saw trying to rescue the King on his way to the scaffold.

The Commune had promised a reward of 100,000 livres to the man who should discover him, and yet he lived on untracked in the house of a shopkeeper named Cortey, the chief of a detachment of the National Guard, a model of a good citizen, and well known as a staunch adherent of the new government.

Batz was secretly admitted into the Temple, and had an interview with the ladies. The Princess Elisabeth was scarcely recognizable, but the Queen seemed to him less altered. Her features were the same, but there was an expression of sorrow on her face which he had never before seen. Guided by Cortey, Batz inspected every detail of the Temple arrangements, and then originated a bold plan of escape, with the assistance of his friend. They found a powerful ally in the citizen Michonis, who, as a member of the Council of the Convention, would be visiting the Temple, and who had succeeded in hiding his sympathy for the Queen under an imperious bearing.

He had acquainted Marie Antoinette with the fall of the Girondists, and had told her of his own views, which were shared by many at first, that the new government would hardly dare to oppose the surrender of the Queen to the Austrian Emperor.

"What does that matter to me?" Marie Antoinette had replied. "It would be the same for me in Vienna as here, or as it was in the Tuileries. My only wish is to rejoin my husband, when such is the will of God, and I am no longer necessary to my children."

In spite of the Queen's indifference to the plan for her rescue, Michonis, Cortey, and Batz resolved that it should be carried out.

Cortey undertook to procure three military cloaks, in which Marie Antoinette, the Princess Elisabeth, and Marie Thérèse were to envelop themselves. The guard consisted of twenty-eight men, whom it was necessary to entrust with the secret. But it was hardly likely that they would dare to dispute Cortey's orders.

The ladies were to mingle with the soldiers while the guard was being changed, and little Charles Louis was to be concealed among the men. The cloaks were procured, the carriages ordered, and the guard was ready. This time it was hoped that no cruel destiny would interfere.

But the shoemaker, Simon, managed to destory the fabric which it had cost such efforts to erect.

It was thought that all the guard had been won over, but there was a traitor among them, for as Simon, who had the chief supervision of the Temple, was returning the same day from the city he was accosted by a National Guard, who handed him a closed letter unaddressed. He opened it and read as follows:—

"Michonis will betray you to-night. Watch!"

Without losing a second, Simon hastened to the Commune, showed his paper, and returned to the Temple armed with a document, by virtue of which Michonis was suspended from his office, and summoned before the Council of the Commune.

It had struck eleven, and the guard who were to enter on duty at midnight had already assembled, Baron Batz among them in disguise.

Simon suddenly appeared, looked round, and perceived Cortey.

"I should have been uneasy if I had not seen you here," he said.

He ordered the guard to advance.

Batz understood well that he would be lost if he uttered a single word. For one moment he thought of shooting Simon on the spot, but desisted on account of the noise.

Cortey promptly ordered the guard to make for the street, and under cover of their movements, Batz left the Tower in safety, though in despair that he had been unable to rescue Marie Antoinette and her children.

Nothing was gained by a strict search. Michonis replied satisfactorily to every question, good-humouredly supplied explanations, and managed to cast doubts on Simon's fanciful representations.

But Simon on his part was convinced that there had existed a secret conspiracy. From the Commune he hastened to Robespierre, and declared to him that the Temple was a perfect hot-bed of every species of conspiracy.

Robespierre attached importance to these communications.

Louis XVI. was dead, but Louis XVII. was still alive.

He had learnt from many quarters that the different parties were beginning to raise their heads, and were likely to coalesce under the banner of the young Prince.

CHAPTER L.

Charles Louis taken from his Mother—The Cobbler Simon.

DURING the last days of June it was resolved by Danton's Committee of Public Safety that Charles Louis should be removed from his mother and confined in the safest corner of the Temple. The plan was to date from July 3rd.

An official arrived at the Tower at nine o'clock at night, when the child was asleep. Marie Antoinette and the princesses were seated at the table patching his clothes.

The Queen had not the slightest suspicion of what was to happen, and rose pale and agitated.

"You want to take my child from me?" she cried. "It is impossible. You cannot think of separating my son from me. He needs my care."

"The Committee of Public Safety has settled it, and we must obey orders at once."

"No," replied the unhappy mother. "Do not require this separation of me."

She placed herself by the bed, like a lioness ready to defend her cubs.

Her movements roused the child, who heard the commotion, saw his mother weeping, and the men threatening her.

"Mamma," he cried, as he seized her by the arm, "do not leave me."

The mother took him up and pressed him to her heart.

"Kill me before you snatch my boy from me," she screamed.

Then she suddenly threw aside her pride, forgot that she had been a Queen, and remembered only that she craved for her child.

With streaming eyes and clasped hands she went up to the

men, threw herself on her knees and begged for mercy, while the two princesses by her side wept and entreated with her.

Two hours passed with supplications from Marie Antoinette, and menaces and insults from the officials, who finally threatened to kill both her son and her daughter. Devotion to her children at last forced her to yield.

The Princess Elisabeth and his sister dressed Charles Louis, for his mother's strength was spent.

When he was ready she put both hands on his head, as she looked with infinite sorrow into his deep, earnest eyes.

"My son," she said, "it is necessary that we part. Think of your duty when I am no longer near you to remind you. Remember God, who is trying you, and your mother, who loves you. Be careful, patient, and honourable. Then your father in heaven will bless you."

She kissed him, then with a firm step she took him by the hand and gave him up into the charge of the officials.

Charles Louis ran back and clung to her skirts.

The mother's strength was nearly exhausted, but she said:—

"You must obey, my child, you *must*."

But he would not, and was finally dragged away by force. His piercing shrieks were heard on the stairs, and they knew that he was struggling to get loose from the men and return to his mother.

The steps at last died out in the distance. The Queen's head was bowed between her hands, and her whole frame shook with convulsive weeping as her tears fell on to the empty bed.

Her daughter and sister-in-law could find no words of comfort for such poignant grief. Marie Antoinette rejected their caresses, and signed to them to leave her. The deepest wounds are hidden from the world, and it was solitude for which she craved in this agonizing hour.

Day broke, but it was powerless to chase away the shadows which seemed to envelop her. Deprived of her last hope, she rose at length from her son's couch and began to pace the floor. There was no longer any wringing of the hands, any cry; only the most crushing, hopeless sorrow.

* * * * * *

Marat's friend, the shoemaker Simon, of whom we have already spoken, was appointed guardian of Charles Louis. He was a fanatical Republican, and had made himself conspicuous in the Temple by his bitter persecution and hatred of the former ruling family.

The King's son lay on the ground for two whole days, weeping and calling for his mother, refusing either to eat or drink.

It was thought in Paris that he had been done away with.

To put an end to the rumour, which caused some uneasiness, he was taken down into the garden that the sentinels might see he was still in the prison.

No sooner had they got him there than he began to scream for his mother, and he was quickly taken up again. In spite of all her entreaties Marie Antoinette was not once allowed to see her child. She besieged every jailer that entered with agonizing questions about her child's health, but only a few even replied to her, and the accounts were so heart-rending that the Princess Elisabeth finally begged the men to conceal the terrible truth from his mother.

During the long weary days and nights, Marie Antoinette's thoughts were centred on the beloved child who had been the aim and object of her life. He had been given up into the unknown hands of the enemy, who possibly even ill-treated him, without a soul who would trouble to dry his tears. If she fell asleep she dreamt that she saw him being devoured by cannibals. She woke bathed in cold perspiration, and spent hours of dread and fear such as drive men to suicide or madness.

Simon systematically ill-treated and corrupted the child. He hardly allowed him to move, and forbade his walks on the roof of the Tower.

He forced him to eat far more than he could digest, and this new mode of life had a grievous effect on his health and character. He became fat, left off growing, and daily grew more feeble and languid. His large, speaking eyes lost their brightness, and Simon's wife ruthlessly cut off the long fair curls that had been his mother's joy and pride.

Until he was placed in the hands of the cobbler he had never drunk anything but water. Now he was forced to drink wine

and brandy to such an extent that he fell helpless to the ground. Incessant alcohol brought on palpitations, which resulted in serious sickness; but as soon as he recovered he was made to drink as before.

The memory of his mother never failed him, in spite of this daily crushing out of every good instinct.

Blows, excessive drinking, all sorts of torture could not efface her beloved countenance, and he called her even in his dreams.

One day Simon brought him a flute. "Your she-wolf of a mother and your dog of an aunt play the piano," he said to him tauntingly. "You can accompany them on the flute now; a nice concert it will make!"

Broken-hearted to hear such language applied to his mother and aunt, Charles Louis pushed aside the flute and refused to touch it.

"Not play upon it!" screamed the cobbler. "You *shall*, and this very minute."

As the child still persisted in his refusal Simon rushed madly upon him and struck him again and again, while the poor little victim suppressed his cries of pain for fear he should be heard below.

Marie Antoinette's constant injunction had been that he must pray to God to forgive his enemies, and this the poor child remembered in the midst of all his tortures.

In the meantime the people of La Vendée had risen and proclaimed the son of Louis XVI. as their King, and at the same time the foreign troops and the army of the emigrants were advancing from the frontier.

Simon paced the floor again and again while he meditated on these tidings.

The royal child was cowering at the foot of his bed, for he had heard Simon say to his wife that if the people of La Vendée ever reached Paris he would smother the wolf's cub before he would give him up.

The cobbler suddenly stopped in his walk, clutched the boy's hair, and raised his bowed head.

He looked at him fixedly and asked, "Capet! If you were set free what would you do to me?"

"I would forgive you," answered the child.

On another occasion Simon was reading aloud about a fête which the Republic had been giving to the people. The account ended with the words:—

"Let us swear to defend the government with the last drop of our blood. The Republic is eternal."

"Do you hear?" said Simon as he put the newspaper on one side; "do you hear, Capet, that the Republic is eternal?"

The boy did not reply.

"So you do not hear, abominable child," shrieked the enraged cobbler. "But you can *see* that the Republic is eternal?"

"Nothing is eternal," answered Charles Louis. He had hardly said the words before a blow from Simon threw him prostrate to the ground.

"Let him alone," said Simon's wife, who felt some compassion for the child. "He is blind, brought up in deceit."

The cobbler grudgingly picked up the young King and flung him on to the bed, saying, as he heard him crying, "It is your own fault that I treat you in this manner; you deserve it."

"I was mistaken," sobbed the child with a bright light in his tear-dimmed eyes. "God is eternal—He alone!"

From time to time he was taken for a breath of fresh air on to the roof of the Tower.

Marie Antoinette discovered that she could see him when he was up there, from one particular spot, through a little crack in a wooden partition, and she would stand hour after hour waiting for a glimpse of her child. It was the only event, the only glimmer of light in her sorrowful existence.

She was standing one day watching as usual when she saw her son approach the platform followed by his tormentor. He looked pale and suffering, was dressed in miserable rags, and was wearing the red cap of the Jacobins, while Simon, who was close on his heels, cuffed and pushed him at every step.

The Queen had seen enough that day. She threw herself sobbing into the arms of her sister-in-law.

"My presentiments have not deceived me," she said. "I knew that he was suffering. My heart would tell me if he were in pain a hundred miles away. I could not rest. I felt the tears

that my unhappy child was shedding far away from me; they fell heavy on my heart. I can hope for nothing now. God has forsaken me!"

The Queen's trials had been so great that her faith in God was well-nigh shaken.

But such crises in a human life are too cruel to be of long duration.

Marie Antoinette regained her composure, she came forth stronger, better, perhaps, from her troubles. Love and trust in God succeeded to doubt and despair—that "love" of which it is written that it "hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things."

She prayed to God for pardon, and she begged her sister-in-law not to be cast down by her want of faith.

CHAPTER LI.

In the Conciergerie.

THE powers of Europe were under arms, ostensibly with the one object of rescuing Marie Antoinette. Many provinces had fallen into the enemy's hands, and Toulon was in the possession of the English. Prodigies of valour were wrought by the Royalists in La Vendée, but nothing could avert the fate of the unfortunate Queen.

Her downfall was foreshadowed by the advent of Robespierre on the Committee of Public Safety. And, as though in reply to some fresh conquests of the foreign troops, a number of stringent measures were resolved upon; among them that Marie Antoinette should be taken to the Conciergerie, the prison of those under sentence of death.

She was roused late in the night of August 1st to enter on this last stage of her trials—the courts of law were to begin their work against her.

She heard the orders for her removal read aloud without evincing the slightest surprise or concern. Elisabeth and Marie Thérèse, who at first had been struck dumb with terror, at length recovered their power of speech and implored, though in vain, to be allowed to accompany the Queen.

The jailers insisted on searching her pockets, which she showed them, and they took a few trifles—the likeness of the Princesse de Lamballe, and of two friends of her childhood, together with a little packet containing locks of hair, her husband's and her children's. The men allowed her to retain her handkerchief and a smelling bottle, fearing she would faint on the way.

Then she collected her poor, ragged clothes. She embraced and kissed her daughter, well knowing that it was for the last

time. She exhorted her to love God, to forgive her enemies, and to be brave, to be loving to her aunt, and to obey her as a mother.

The child stood as if petrified. Not a word passed her lips, and she did not return her mother's embrace.

The Queen turned to the Princess Elisabeth and recommended her children to her care, to which her sister-in-law replied by a few whispered words of encouragement and promise. The Queen made no rejoinder, and went to the door without once looking back. As she passed the staircase where her son had disappeared she stood still for one minute and gazed up, then calmly and silently went on her way.

As she was passing out through the gate of the Temple she struck her head against a beam.

One of the men asked if she had hurt herself.

"No," she replied; "nothing can hurt me more."

A carriage was in readiness, into which she entered, then an official of high rank and two gendarmes took the seats opposite her.

The streets were decked with garlands and triumphal arches on the occasion of an approaching Republican fête.

It was about four o'clock in the morning when they reached the Conciergerie. The carriage drew up, the Queen alighted and went in as though already acquainted with the way.

Fersen wrote a week later in his diary: "It is reported that the coachman did not know whom he was driving, though he may have suspected it, as he had to wait such a long time. The men alighted first, then the Queen, leaning on the arm of the driver."

She was conducted through a narrow passage, which was lighted by a single smoking lamp, and reeked with the fumes of wine and tobacco. Two dogs rushed up to her, barking angrily. She was so terrified the men were afraid she would faint.

Her cell, which was small and damp, without a fireplace, was entered by the third door to the right, on the ground floor. Two narrow grated windows looked into a courtyard, where the female prisoners took their daily exercise.

There were three beds in the room. One for the Queen,

another for the woman who was to attend to her, the third was occupied by the two gendarmes, who were under strict orders never to allow her one moment's privacy—night or day.

The porter had hastily made a few preparations for her arrival. Marie Antoinette's bed was like the others; but after consulting with his wife, and without asking the opinion of the Commune, he had procured a new horse-hair mattress, and covered it with a ragged but thick woollen blanket. He also placed an easy-chair, a stool, and a washstand in the cell. There were no curtains before the window, but there was an old screen in one corner.

Marie Antoinette signed the document respecting her removal, and looked upon this station on her path of sorrow without either surprise or curiosity.

The official, the two gendarmes, and the turnkey withdrew, and the prisoner was left alone for a time with the porter's wife, Madame Richard, and her servant, Rosalie Lamorlière.

She looked at them as though to try and fathom how much she could expect from their mercy.

The servant offered to assist her in undressing.

"Thank you," she answered; "but I can manage by myself."

She stood on a stool, and hung her watch on a nail in the wall. The day dawned as she undressed and lay down in bed—"a bed that was certainly unworthy of her," we learn from Madame Richard; "but we had at all events been able to provide fine sheets and a pillow."

Marie Antoinette became so weak and thin while she was in the Conciergerie that those who had known her in former days could hardly recognize her. Exhausted as she was by violent emotion and her crushing sorrows, and shut up, without exercise, in the foul air of her cell, she was hardly able to hold herself upright.

A criminal of the very worst description performed the meanest work of the prison and occasionally entered her cell.

He was asked how she was treated. "Just like the others," he said.

"How is she dressed?" said some.

"Capet's widow wears a black gown, which is completely in rags. She looks like a plucked fowl," was his rejoinder.

The wretchedness of the prison was a far less trial to her than the constant presence of the gendarmes.

They were frequently relieved, and but few showed the least tact or courtesy, most of them even smoking and playing cards the whole night through to make the time pass more quickly.

But a few of the soldiers showed a better feeling, and one morning one of them even noticed that Marie Antoinette looked more ailing than usual.

He asked her how she was.

"I feel very unwell," she replied; "the tobacco smoke was so trying I could not sleep."

"How abominable of me not to have thought of it, and to have caused you suffering," said the man, throwing down his pipe.

An old woman of eighty, named Larivière, who in her youth had been an under-servant in the house of the Duc de Penthièvre, was chosen to wait upon the Queen.

Her obliging, respectful behaviour recalled her former position, and inspired the Queen with confidence.

But she was speedily replaced by Harel, a coarse, brutal woman, whom the prisoner instinctively mistrusted. She was, however, soon dismissed.

For many weeks the Queen never undressed at night; she seemed to expect ill-treatment at any moment, or else a summons to appear in court.

She lost her appetite entirely.

"She cannot live long at this rate," said her jailers.

The food at first was very bad. For instance, a skinny fowl was put before her four consecutive days to *force* her to eat it, but she could not, and it finally became tainted.

But there was still a spring of compassion on the barren waste where a cruel fate had cast her lot. The servant Rosalie often found an excuse to go and see to something in the Queen's cell, when she would spin out her work as long as possible, and try to gratify some little wish of the prisoner.

Marie Antoinette was extremely particular about cleanliness; and in this prison, where she was buried alive, there were other smells besides tobacco and the fumes of wine to try her.

Rosalie thought of this, and placed a bunch of fresh flowers on

the table as often as she could. Then, when the damp and chill of autumn had succeeded to the warmth of summer and flowers became scarce, she brought her incense.

Her mistress, Madame Richard, was a reserved, taciturn woman, who was not in the least affected by the sight of the tumbrils which daily left the Conciergerie laden with victims for the scaffold.

But even her habitual cold composure was gradually thawed at the sight of fallen greatness, and she too did what she could to alleviate the Queen's misery.

Marie Antoinette one day expressed a wish for a melon.

Madame Richard went at once to the nearest market.

"Get me a melon," she said to one of the saleswomen, whom she knew; "never mind what it costs."

"I expect you want it for our unfortunate Queen," answered the woman. "Take the best I have; keep your money, and tell your prisoner that there are still hearts that ache for her sorrows."

The grating in front of the window made her cell quite dark, even when it was still light outside, and she would undress by the faint glimmer of a lamp in the prison-yard. She sat whole nights on the edge of her bed praying for the patience she so sorely needed, or strengthening herself by repeating passages she had learnt from the Holy Scriptures.

Low women of the most disreputable character walked side by side with the highest ladies of the land in the court-yard, all expecting their summons to the scaffold.

A group of the former one day assembled under the window and accused her, "the hyena from Trianon," with shrieking voices, as the cause of their imprisonment. The Queen, who was distressed at the thought of being the object of curses and loathing, which she had never been able to understand, raised her eyes to heaven with such a look of despair that the turnkey, who was in her cell, could not control an outburst of indignation against these furies.

Death was the one subject of conversation within the walls of the Conciergerie, and a clerk appeared each day to call out in a loud voice the names of those who were to be guillotined the following morning. Marie Antoinette constantly caught the

titles of former acquaintances, and this fearful daily death-roll was one of the most cruel features of her imprisonment. In her gloomy cell she could distinctly hear the shrieks of the condemned and the heavy progress of the tumbrils in which they were driven to the scaffold.

During all this time Elisabeth and Marie Thérèse were in despair as to the fate of the Queen, and it was long before they heard how she was and how she was being treated.

Marie Antoinette would have thanked God if she had been allowed to occupy herself, but complete inactivity was part of her sentence in the Conciergerie; and although she never complained, it was evident that she suffered keenly by this enforced idleness.

By means of a faithful adherent outside, her sister-in-law managed to send her some knitting which she had begun—a pair of socks for her boy.

"We sent with it all the wool and silk we could find," her daughter tells us in her *Mémoires*, for we knew how she must be longing for occupation. But we heard afterwards that the work had not been given to her for fear she should injure herself.

In the meantime the Queen had secreted some big pins, with which she scratched on the walls some verses from the Psalms in French and German, and also passages from *The Imitation of Christ.*

She possessed one single book called *The Christian's Day*, which she read again and again. But later on she begged to have the loan of a few books, to which the Commune agreed. In the accounts connected with her residence in the Conciergerie we find:—

"For loan of books: 16 livres."

Prayer, meditation, and reading filled up her life, and the constant monotony contributed not a little to the weakening of her body, though it in no way impaired her mind.

She had done with every earthly tie, except the one strong link that bound her to her children, and her thoughts were never absent from her suffering boy, whose likeness and a lock of his hair she had on her breast, hidden in a little yellow kid glove he had worn, and which she kissed and saturated with her tears by the side of her miserable bed.

The wife of the porter—Richard—came in to her one day leading a child by the hand of the same age as Marie Antoinette's son, with the same large blue eyes and the same golden hair. The Queen started when she saw him, threw her arms round him, kissed him, and wept over him. She could bear to hear her own forsaken condition and numberless trials spoken of without undue depression, but her tears flowed at the least mention of Charles Louis and the fact that he was torn from her for ever.

"Above all," Madame Richard used to say to those admitted to the Queen's cell, "be careful not to speak to her of her children."

CHAPTER LII.

Last Attempts to Rescue the Queen—The Jailer Bault.

MICHONIS, whom we named in a previous chapter as a friend of the Queen, was now in the service of the Republic. He had been made Administrator of the Police, and had so managed that it was he who had to search her cell.

He wept when he saw her again for the first time.

The valet Hue also found his way to the Conciergerie, and without much difficulty won over Richard and his wife to the Queen's side.

Even a few of the leaders of the Revolution were seized with compassion. Camille Desmoulins tried to rescue her by force, but simply brought about his own destruction. Others were won over by bribes, among them Hébert, who, under the name of "Père Duchesne," had organized a violent attack upon the King and Queen. As he seemed to be changing his tone he was suspected of treachery, and in order to mislead his colleagues he showed himself even more violent and bitter than before.

The report that the leaders of the Government were under a milder influence soon spread in the city, and Madame Richard even spoke to the Queen of the probability that she would be released in exchange for a prisoner of war.

But Marie Antoinette shook her head. "They sacrificed the King," she said, "and they will kill me too. No, I shall see neither my unhappy children nor my saintly, dearly-loved sister again."

And yet there was a chance that she would be rescued. We read in Count Fersen's diary that plans had been laid to release her, the Princess Elisabeth and the children, in exchange for some French prisoners in Austria.

This was confirmed later on by Drouet, the postmaster's son, who had been taken prisoner in Germany, and had revealed the scheme when questioned by Prince Metternich.

As Drouet was a member of the Committee of Public Safety, it was natural that he should be cognisant of any plans under discussion.

The powers failed to utilise the opportunity, therefore the responsibility for the fate of the Royal Family did not rest solely on the revolutionary party.

In spite of the disappointment which had hitherto accompanied all his efforts, Count Fersen still meditated on fresh plans to rescue the Queen.

The report that she was to be brought to trial was sufficient to cause him the most poignant anguish, especially when he realized how feeble was the help of those whom he had enlisted in her cause.

Although the foreign powers *appeared* to be interested in the rescue of Marie Antoinette, it was but a farce for the majority of those concerned in it; and it is difficult to realize greater callousness for the victims of the Revolution than that exhibited by the statesmen who boasted of waging war on her behalf.

The Austrian Minister Thugut was violently opposed to the very thought of saving the Queen, and even Count Mercy was slow to use his influence for her. It seems pretty certain that it mainly depended on him to carry on the negotiations originated by the leaders of the Revolution to a favourable result.

In the meantime he was strongly of opinion that his country ought not to listen to any French propositions, but simply continue to use force.

While old friends abroad were refraining from action, those in France were resolved to make a final effort to snatch the Queen from impending death on the scaffold.

"Many were full of interest in the fate of my mother," Marie Thérèse writes in her diary. "I have heard since her death that there was more than one project to rescue her from the Conciergerie, but that they came to nothing.

"One attempt was unsuccessful because when the Queen had been instructed to speak to the second guard, she unfortunately

made a mistake and addressed the first. Another time she had already left her cell and was in the corridor when a gendarme stopped her further progress, and, although he had been bribed, forced her to return to her prison."

History knows nothing of the first of these attempts. The other is probably identical with the one known under the name of "l'Affaire de l'Oeillet," arranged by Michonis and a nobleman named Rougeville.

Rougeville had long entertained the idea of making a bold venture on behalf of Marie Antoinette when he happened to meet Michonis, who, as we know, was a visitor at the Conciergerie.

The two arranged a time, and went together to the cell of the Queen, who was deeply agitated on recognizing Rougeville, whom she had frequently seen in former days.

The nobleman was holding a pink in his hand, which he let fall, and then signed to her to pick it up. The Queen stooped, seized it, and pressed it to her lips. A strip of paper, on which a few words had been hastily written, was hidden in the flower. She discovered it, and scratched a word or two in reply with a pin.

One of the guard saw the act and snatched the paper from her. Rougeville fled precipitately, and the greatest uneasiness prevailed in the Conciergerie. Richard and his wife were dismissed on the spot, and a price was set on the head of Rougeville.

From that day the Queen was watched even more closely than before. Rosalie Lamorlière did not dare to bring hér any more flowers. Conspiracy was seen in every blossom, and a plan of flight in every change of linen provided.

Up to this time she had been allowed to keep her watch, a gift from her mother, which she wore fastened to a pretty chain round her neck, but now it was taken away in spite of her tears and resistance.

Two diamond rings, one of them her betrothal ring, that still glittered on her poor emaciated fingers, were also taken from her, though she managed to secrete the locket with her boy's likeness until within a few days of her death.

Richard's successor was a man named Bault, who had been told that his own head was on his shoulders only so long as the Queen

was a prisoner in her cell and subject to the prescribed regulations; also, that he was never to approach her except accompanied by the two gendarmes.

The Committee of Public Safety decreed that Marie Antoinette was to have the usual prison fare; and although she herself did not appear to notice the change in her diet, Bault vigorously opposed it.

"She is *my* prisoner," he said. "I have to answer for her with my head, and it is my province to watch over her food. She might be poisoned, and I will not suffer one drop of water to be taken into her cell without my permission."

The man had a warm heart under a harsh exterior, and the anxious vigilance which he exhibited in reference to her food was purely an excuse which enabled him to procure her better nourishment.

Winter was approaching, and the Queen's health became more and more frail. She shivered with cold, and complained of rheumatic pains in her knees. Her white hair came off in large tufts; her face became pinched and wrinkled like a woman of seventy. She nearly lost the sight of one eye, and was so nervous that she trembled all over every time the door of her cell was opened.

After the appointment of Bault as turnkey, Rosalie Lamorlière was rarely able to gain access to the prison, and the only female who regularly attended to the Queen during these last days of her life was the daughter of the turnkey. She and her father took it in turns to brush her hair.

When Bault did it, the Queen utilized the few minutes to talk to him of her dear ones in the Temple.

Sometimes she expressed her gratitude for the kindness which he showed her. She used to call him "Bon" instead of "Bault."

"I call you good because you *are* good," she said; and added, "Bon vaut mieux que beau" (beau—Beault).

CHAPTER LIII.

Marie Antoinette before the Tribunal.

THE 14th October was fixed for the trial of Marie Antoinette.

The world was nothing to her. But her self-respect had not forsaken her, and as far as her poverty would allow she dressed herself with care for the occasion.

She had paid but little attention to her hair all the time she had been in the Conciergerie, but when she had to appear at the bar she dressed it more carefully, and trimmed the white cap she was in the habit of wearing with some crape and ribbons she had by her in a box.

The door to the court was thrown open, and the Queen tottered forward, through crowds of spectators, guarded by a strong detachment of soldiers.

She was but the shadow of her former self. Prison air had spoilt her lovely skin, and her eyes were bloodshot and swollen with constant weeping, while her emaciated features were furrowed with the deep lines of sorrow which no effort of will can efface.

But her mind was strong and firm, her demeanour calm. She was the woman of noble blood, withered by the storms of life, aged and humiliated, but whose mental powers had remained uncrushed.

The court was filled with curious spectators. Women of the very lowest type had emerged from obscurity under the shadow of the Revolution. They had been present at the storming of the Bastille. They had ransacked the Hotel de Ville on the morning of October 5th, 1789, and we know what excesses they had committed on their march to Versailles. They had polluted the King's palace on August 10th, and defiled it with every conceivable abomination after it had been taken.

And not less disgusting was their language as they accompanied the victims of the Revolution to their death.

Their appearance was as bold and immodest as could be, and their hearts were without one spark of compassion. They had been made use of by the Jacobins, on more than one occasion, to perambulate the streets of the capital and foment discord and dissension among the people.

And now they were especially active in the gallery of the National Convention, where they shrieked and yelled to their hearts' content as they strengthened the hands of the Jacobin party.

They had arrived before daybreak to make sure of their seats, and were talking loud as they interrupted the proceedings with their disgusting remarks. Daily practice had perfected them in the art of hissing and applauding. A sign from the Jacobin deputies was enough to give them their cue; if they heard a word referring to the welfare of their country they threw down their knitting and nerved themselves to whine and moan. But if "blood or murder" reached their ears they became jubilant in their shrieks of joy.

They had secured the very best seats for the trial of Marie Antoinette, although before the opening of the hall to the public, an effort had been made to secure places for the most zealous male adherents of the Republic.

In spite of these precautions the Queen's expression and her blanched face, which in contrast with her long black gown gave her an almost spectral appearance, aroused a movement among the spectators which filled her judges with alarm.

The accused was seated on an iron bench, and cast a glance full of dignity and sorrow on the spectators, the jury, and the judges. Then she moved her fingers slowly on the bar in front, as though playing on a piano. Her two pleaders sat on either side of her.

The enquiry began.

"What is your name?"

The Queen rose and answered distinctly:—

"Marie Antoinette, Archduchess of Austria——"

"No, no!" shrieked Hébert. "No archduchess! The Republic does not recognize such titles. Who are you?"

The Queen repeated calmly and with even more emphasis:—

"Archduchess of Austria and widow of Louis Capet, formerly King of the French."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-eight."

"Where were you when you were arrested?"

"In the hall of the Legislative Assembly."

Then, according to prescribed custom, a clerk read aloud the bill of indictment. It was a compound of all the crimes of which a young and foreign princess could possibly be accused, and a malicious repetition of all the reports which had been current for ten years.

"Like the Messalinas, Brunhildes, Frédégondes, and Médicis, who in former days were called queens of France, and whose hateful names will never be expunged from the annals of history," began the indictment, "Marie Antoinette, Louis Capet's widow, has, from the moment of her taking up her residence in France, been a scourge and vampire in our midst. Before the glorious Revolution, which freed the French nation, she was in league with the man who called himself Emperor of Austria and King of Bohemia and Hungary, and this union militated against the interests of France. She was not content, in concert with Louis Capet's brothers and the culprit Calonne, with paying for the said man's criminal intrigues and squandering in a shameful manner the money of the State, which had been earned by the sweat of the people, but she sent from time to time millions to this Emperor—millions which served and still serve to support Austria in her wars against France.

"The people's money is exhausted with this unheard of expenditure. Capet's widow did not desist either from her culpable connection with foreign powers or with the provinces of France, but employed for her purpose reliable helpers, whom she paid with money belonging to the nation. She tried by every means in her power to bring about a counter-revolution.

"With this object in view, and under cover of the so-called necessity of effecting a juncture between the body-guards and the officers and men of the Flemish regiment, she arranged on October 1, 1789, a banquet which, in accordance with her instruc-

tions, became 'a veritable orgy.' Widow Capet and her assistants encouraged the intoxicated guests to sing songs expressive of the greatest contempt for the people and the most servile devotion to the throne. She incited them, moreover, to adopt the white cockade and to trample the national cockade under foot.

"In conjunction with Louis Capet she caused to be printed and circulated innumerable counter-revolutionary pamphlets all over the land of the Republic. She carried her duplicity and faithlessness to such an extent that she also had copies taken of every paper in which she was not flattered and distributed abroad, in order that foreign powers might imagine that she was ill-treated by Frenchmen, and might therefore be the more incited to espouse her cause. In order to further her counter-revolutionary plans as rapidly as possible, in the beginning of October, 1789, she brought about a dearth of provisions in the capital, which induced crowds of citizens of both sexes to march to Versailles October 5th of the same year.

"Immediately after her return to Paris, this indefatigable Widow Capet summoned secret meetings, in which it was discussed how the rights of the people and the recognized laws of the Assembly could be done away with. It was decided in one of these sittings that the often attempted, but abortive plans for the flight of the Capet family must be definitely carried out. Widow Capet has confessed that it was she who organized their escape, and that it was she who opened and closed the doors through which the fugitives had to pass.

"It is also certain, according to the statement of her son, Charles Louis, and of her daughter, that Lafayette, who on every occasion was her especial favourite, as well as Bailly, who at that time was Mayor of Paris, was present when the flight took place, and that they did all in their power to promote it.

"After her return from Varennes she again presided over meetings with her accomplices, and, abetted by Lafayette, obtained that the gates of the Tuileries should be locked, to hinder citizens from going in and out of the gardens.

"Only those who had a pass were admitted. This blockade, which took place ostensibly to punish the fugitives from Varennes, was nothing more than a concerted scheme to deprive

the citizens of a chance of discovering the plans that were being formed against them in this abominable place.

"The murders and bloodshed which occurred in so many quarters of the Republic had been previously arranged in these meetings of the Widow Capet. The blood of countless patriots was shed at her instigation, with the object of bringing about a change in decrees favourable to the rights of men, but unacceptable to the grasping love of power of Louis Capet and Marie Antoinette.

"After the adoption of the Constitution in 1791 the Widow Capet wrought incessantly to overthrow it. Every step she took had for its aim to destroy liberty, and to drive Frenchmen back to the yoke under which they had sighed for so many hundred years.

"Widow Capet chose incapable ministers and generals, who had long been recognized by the people as enemies to liberty. By her own cunning and that of her unscrupulous abettors, she managed to replace Louis Capet's new guard with officers who, when they had previously been required to take their oath as citizens, had left the service, and who were far more suited to be in Coblentz, where they finally found a refuge.

"It was Widow Capet who, in unison with the enemies of the Assembly, declared war against her brother, the King of Bohemia and Hungary. It was her intrigues and double-dealing which have always been so hurtful to France, that was the cause of our first repulse in Belgium.

"This same Widow Capet betrayed false plans of campaign to the foreign armies, who were always acquainted beforehand with the movements of the Republican troops—*she* was consequently the cause of the defeats which they suffered from time to time.

"Aided by her treacherous allies the Widow Capet finally planned the awful massacre of August 10th, which was with difficulty arrested by the incredibly stupendous efforts of the friends of the nation. Armed men were assembled in her residence and in the underground passages of the Tuileries, whom she kept in a constant state of intoxication from the 9th to the 10th of August. And with the same object in view she collected round her a troop of so-called 'Knights of the dagger.'

"Probably out of anxiety lest the conspiracies which emanated from her should not bring about the desired results, the Widow Capet was to be seen as early as the evening of the 7th in the hall where her devoted soldiers were preparing their cartridges. She exhorted them to be quick, and in order to encourage them the more she took up one of the balls and sharpened it. It is well known that at six o'clock in the morning of August 10th she went to Louis Capet to force him to go down into the Tuileries gardens and review the guards.

"On his return she handed him a pistol, saying, 'Now it is high time to show yourself.' When he refused to take the pistol she jeered at him for a coward. Although she has denied that she gave orders to fire on the people, there is not the slightest doubt that such was the decision resulting from the nightly meetings in the palace. This is vouched for by her demeanour towards the soldiers in the hall, the incident of the pistol, and her words to Louis Capet, her sudden flight from the Tuileries, together with the shot which was heard as she entered the hall of the Assembly.

"By means of the influence which she exercised over her husband, the Widow Capet taught him to be a hypocrite, and to express in public the very opposite of what he thought.

"Finally, the Widow Capet was immoral to the very core, a modern Agrippina, as lascivious and corrupt, as well as pitiless as she in all her crimes."

Marie Antoinette had listened to the indictment without a sign of emotion—like one who is inured to hatred, and for whom scandal has lost its sting.

Even when Fouquier Tinville put her on an equality with Nero's mother, and hinted at the grossest immorality, she remained calm, though an expression of supreme contempt passed over her lips.

The witnesses were now called. The Queen recognized several faces that were well known to her. Bailly, who had opposed her in the early days of the Revolution, but who now esteemed and pitied her; Admiral Estaing, who had never liked her, and believed that she had stood in the way of his promotion, but who was too honourable to wish to injure her now; a former maid-

servant from Versailles, who declared that Marie Antoinette had tried to bring about the assassination of the Duc d'Orléans; the cobbler Simon, who accused her of fostering intrigues in the Temple; the gendarmes Gilbert and Dufresne; as well as the turnkey Richard, who told of the 'affaire de l'oeillet.'

A deep expression of melancholy played from time to time on the countenance of the accused. But it was only for a second. She generally seemed to be indifferent to all she heard, as well as to the glances that followed her—in short, to all that was going on in the hall.

A large number who had wished to be present, but who in spite of their efforts had been unable to get places, had congregated round the doors, listening eagerly to the accounts of those who appeared at intervals in the doorway for a whiff of fresh air.

Voices were heard questioning those who were seated inside.

"Is Madame Capet as haughty now as she was in Versailles?" asked one.

"Is Madame Veto frightened?" shouted another.

"Is Madame Veto crying? Does she admit her crimes?" said a third.

Several Royalists had mingled with the crowd, and were waiting for news with feverish anxiety.

Later on in the day one of the Dames de la Halle came out of the hall, and with eyes full of tears reported to those around that the Queen would probably be saved.

"Marie Antoinette has answered the questions like an angel," she said.

The Royalists were elated with joy.

"She will never be condemned to death," they said; "she will be exiled."

And they went from group to group with the good tidings.

The crowd outside gradually became less. Jacobin spies terrified the Royalists, and incited the opponents of the accused to scream their hateful insults louder and louder.

In the meantime the statements of the witnesses and the examination of the Queen were still going on.

Her emaciated, sharply-defined features, which told of her

long period of suffering, seemed to indicate that whether the scaffold claimed her or not, she could hardly be long for this world.

But each time that she opened her lips to reply to her judges it was easy to see that life was strong yet beneath that shattered appearance. She held her own with dignity, and discomfited the enemies who, with malicious glee, had expected to see her fail.

She compromised nobody in her replies. She calmly bore the hatred of her enemies, and shielded her friends with tact.

When she was accused of ruling her husband, she replied, "There is a great difference between advising a thing and bringing it to pass."

When they reproached her with having been the most inveterate enemy to the Republic, and that after Louis Capet's death she had considered her son the heir to the throne, she replied:—

"If France is to be prosperous under a King, I hope that he may be my son; but if it is better for the country to be without one, then we shall both rejoice in her good fortune."

One of the jury, who did not think the burden laid upon her even then sufficiently heavy, alluded again to almost impossible immorality, the mention of which the Queen had previously passed over unnoticed. Her silence and unconcern made the court think that she had not heard or not understood. Fouquier Tinville observed in a loud voice that she had not replied, when she rose, and with the dignity of purity and innocence defended herself in a few electrifying words, as she appealed to the mothers that were present.

This was one moment of triumph in the hour of her humiliation, and heart-rending weeping was heard from those who but just now had joined in treading her under foot, while many women were carried fainting from the court.

An attempt was made to neutralise the effect of the Queen's words by returning with all speed to the examination of the witnesses who had been summoned in reference to the attack on the Tuileries the 20th of June. But the meeting listened with scant attention to these further details, and at five o'clock

in the afternoon, in an almost inaudible voice, the President declared the sitting to be over.

The hall was cleared as soon as it was announced that further hearing was to be postponed.

But the crowd surged in the corridors and in front of the Hotel de Ville, where whispered comments were heard from some of the groups:—

"She is wonderful. They cannot condemn her to more than exile."

Exhausted with the tedium of the meeting, Marie Antoinette had frequently begged for a glass of water.

Among the officials and officers present, of whom any one ten years ago would have run to gain the honour of fetching her this glass of water, and would have handed it to her on bended knee, there was not one to be found to-day who dared to render her this simple service.

One of the gendarmes, who had accompanied her from the Conciergerie, was at last overcome with pity, and brought her the poor refreshment.

The Queen was exhausted almost to madness, and when she began to walk she stumbled and begged for help.

"I cannot see," she murmured, and nearly fainted.

The same gendarme offered her his arm and assisted her down the stairs.

The act was sufficient to insure his dismissal; he was thrown into prison and guillotined.

As the trial was to be continued the following morning, care had been taken not only to imprison those who had shown compassion to Marie Antoinette, but also to admit none into court whose countenances did not express satisfaction with her fate.

October 15th was her last day of suffering; the next would bring release—death.

Further witnesses were called. Among them the former Minister of War, who bowed low before her, as in the old Versailles days. He was asked if he knew the accused.

"Yes," he replied, as he again bent his head. "I have the honour of being acquainted with the Queen."

The trial was over at last, and the witnesses had been unable to prove her guilt.

She was asked if she had anything to say with reference to their statements. She replied:—

"I did not know the witnesses yesterday. I was unaware what accusations were to be brought against me. I can only say that I was the wife of Louis XVI., and obliged to act in harmony with his will."

By this time night had come on. The two pleaders, who for form's sake had been assigned to her, now rose. Chauveau-Lagarde spoke first, then Fronson-Ducaudray, both without either eloquence or zeal.

"How tired you must be, Monsieur Chauveau-Lagarde," Marie Antoinette whispered in his ear; "I am very grateful to you for your defence."

The words were heard, however, and both advocates were arrested before her eyes.

The President summed up the evidence, and sharply and concisely urged the suit, which he took care to inform the jury had been brought against Marie Antoinette by the French nation, and reminding them of their duty.

After a few words, breathing the most intense hatred, with a sketch of the accused's public life, he submitted the following questions:—

1. "Is it proved that traitorous coalitions have existed with foreign powers and other enemies of the Republic, such as have had for their object to assist our foes with money to make it possible for them to invade French territory, and to facilitate their conquests?"

2. "Is it proved that Marie Antoinette of Austria, Louis Capet's widow, has approved of these coalitions, and has shared in these intrigues?"

3. "Is it proved that a conspiracy has been formed to arm citizen against citizen, and so to kindle the flame of civil war in the midst of the Republic?"

4. "Has the Widow Capet taken part in this conspiracy?"

The jury withdrew, deliberated for an hour, and returned to give their decided unanimous verdict on all four indictments.

The sentence of death was pronounced.

The communication of the judge was received by the audience in absolute silence.

Marie Antoinette remained immovable, and it was only for one moment that an expression of surprise passed over her face.*

Then she went from the court with head erect, and without deigning to cast one look either on her judges or on any of the bystanders.

* Chauveau-Lagarde maintains in his *Mémoires* that the Queen was crushed with surprise, and that she had hoped for deliverance up to the very last moment. Although it is her counsel who speaks thus, it is certain that she had long lost all illusion as to her fate. At all events, her momentary weakness must have been very short, and her astonishment hardly perceptible. *Le Moniteur* and *Le Bulletin du Tribunal Révolutionnaire* are agreed that the face of the Queen was absolutely impassive, and Chauveau-Lagarde himself writes: "She did not show the least sign of fear, anger, or weakness."

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CHAPTER LIV.

The Queen's Will—Her Last Days.

It was four o'clock in the morning when Marie Antoinette returned to her cell. She was left alone for the first time since her stay in the Conciergerie, but the two gendarmes were on guard outside her door.

Bault must have received orders to supply her with writing materials if she wished it, for on her asking for them he instantly provided pen, paper, and ink.

She sat down and wrote her famous letter to the Princess Elisabeth, that high-toned, touching farewell which is called "Marie Antoinette's will."

"*October* 16*th*, 4.30 a.m.

"It is to you, my dear sister, that I write my last letter. I have just been sentenced, not to a shameful death—that is only for criminals—but to go and rejoin your brother. Innocent as he was, I hope to be able to show the same composure in my last moments. I am calm, like all such whose consciences do not accuse them. It rends me to the heart to leave my poor children. You know that I only lived for them and for you, my good and well-loved sister; you, who for true friendship's sake have sacrificed all in order to remain with us. And in what a condition do I leave you! I was told during the trial that my daughter had been separated from you.* Poor child! I dare not write to her; she would not receive my letter. Accept my blessing for both my children. I hope that some day when they are bigger they will be brought back to you and appreciate your loving tenderness towards them. May they both remember what I unceasingly impressed upon them: that strict adherence to

* This was a mistake on the Queen's part.

duty is the best safeguard of our life, and that their mutual love and confidence will bring them happiness. I wish my daughter to feel that in virtue of her seniority she ought constantly to help her brother with her counsel and experience. May her love to him make this clear! I trust that my son will always treat his sister with the care and attention born of devotion.

"Finally, may they both feel that in whatever position they find themselves they can never be truly happy unless united. Let them take their example from us! How much comfort we have had in our sorrow through our mutual attachment! In prosperity all joy is doubled if it can be shared with a friend, and where are truer and more faithful friends to be found than in one's own family? May my son never forget his father's last words, which I emphatically repeat: 'Let him never try to avenge our death!'

"I must mention one thing to you that gives me pain. I know the child has often caused you annoyance. Forgive him, dear sister; think of his tender years, and how easy it is to force a child to repeat words and even name things he does not understand.*

"A day will come—I hope so—when he will appreciate more fully your piety and tenderness.

"It now remains to me to confide my last thoughts to your care. I ought to have done so at the beginning of my trial. But apart from the fact that I was not allowed to write, all has passed so rapidly that I really could not have found time.

"I die in the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman faith, which was my father's, in which I was brought up, and which I have always recognized. I look for no spiritual comfort, for I do not know if there are any priests of this religion; and besides, this place would expose them to far too many dangers. From the bottom of my heart I pray God to pardon all the sins that I have committed since I first saw the light. I hope that He in His goodness will hear my last prayers, as well as those I have sent

* Marie Antoinette is alluding to the coarse obscene expressions with which Louis XVII.'s childlike innocence had been sullied. We can feel how anxious the poor mother was lest some of the disgusting words which had literally been put into the mouth of the child should grieve the heart of the Princess Elisabeth.

up to Him for months past, to entreat Him to receive my soul for His loving-kindness and mercy's sake.

"I beg all those whom I know, and you in especial, dear sister, to pardon all sorrow that I have unwittingly caused you. I forgive my enemies their sins against me. I say farewell to my aunts and all my brothers and sisters. I had friends, and the thought of separating from them and their sorrows is one of the greatest griefs that death can cause me. They must at least be told that I thought of them when death was nigh at hand.

"Farewell, my true and well-loved sister! May this letter reach you! Think of me constantly! I embrace you and the poor children with all my heart. My God! How agonizing it is to leave them for ever!

"Farewell! Farewell! I dare not occupy myself with anything now but my religious duties. As I am free to choose, they may possibly bring me a priest. But I declare here that I will not say one word to him, and that I shall treat him simply as an unwelcome intruder."

Bault now entered the cell. The Queen had been weeping while she wrote, and as she handed him the paper she covered it yet again with her tears and kisses.

The letter never reached the Princess Elisabeth.

The gendarme outside must have observed what was going on in the cell, for when Bault came out he asked for the letter. The turnkey was made to take it to Fouquier Tinville, who kept it in his own house instead of delivering it at the Temple. It was found here many years later by some Government Commissioners, who were appointed to examine his papers, and was placed among the documents touching the suit that was brought against him.

A trustworthy messenger gave it to Louis XVIII. in 1816. The so-called "will" of Marie Antoinette is counter-signed by Fouquier, Guffroy, Massieu, Legot, and Leceintre, and is preserved among the French national archives. The traces of her tears are still evident on the paper.

After Bault had left her the Queen threw herself on her knees and prayed long and fervently. The parish priest of S^te^ Marguerite, who was a prisoner in a cell opposite to hers, stretched out his arms towards her, and thus gave her his blessing.

Then she rose, lay down fully dressed on her bed, covered her feet warmly up in the blanket, and God gave her some hours of peaceful sleep.

When day dawned, the turnkey's daughter came in to help her. The Queen was still on her bed, and the candle had burnt down into the socket.

She rose, ate a piece of bread and the wing of a chicken which the young girl had brought, and then began to arrange her dress.

She put on black stockings and black high-heeled shoes, a white gown which she had formerly worn in the morning, a white jacket with black ribbon bows, and a white kerchief round her shoulders. Then she cut off her hair and fastened on her head a linen cap without strings.

A knock was heard at the cell door. A schismatic priest, named Girard, was outside, and demanded to hear her confession.

But the Queen refused to confess. The split in the Church, for which such as he were mainly responsible, was, according to her views, one of the worst stains on the Revolution.

"I thank you," she said, "but my religion forbids me to accept the forgiveness of God through a priest who is of another persuasion."

"Madame," replied Girard, "what will be said when it becomes known that in your last moments you have refused to accept the means of grace provided by the Church?"

"You may tell such persons as speak to you on the subject that Divine Compassion has taken care to procure me them," she replied.

It is said, on reliable authority, that a priest faithful to the Monarchy as well as to the old ecclesiastical government had gained access to the Conciergerie a month prior to this date, through the help of a Mademoiselle Fouché, that he had secretly heard her confession and granted her absolution.

The under-warder, Larivière, son of the old woman who had at first waited on the Queen, entered the cell at this minute.

"Tell your mother," said Marie Antoinette to him, "that I thank her heartily for her care of me, and that I beg her to pray to God for me."

There was again a knock at the door, and the hour for the

arrival of the executioner was very near. It was the clerk and his witnesses, who had come to read her death-warrant.

"It is unnecessary to read it aloud," said the Queen; "I know the contents."

"That may be," said the clerk; "but it has to be done some time."

"Do you think that the people will let me reach the scaffold without tearing me in pieces?" she asked.

"Madame," answered one of the witnesses, "you shall arrive at the scaffold without the least harm."

Finally, the executioner came—the last to make his appearance in this tragic drama.

The priest tried to make a few observations. "Your death will expiate——" he began.

Marie Antoinette interrupted him: "Mistakes, but not crimes," she said.

"Do you wish me to accompany you?" he asked.

"Do just as you like," answered the Queen.

She embraced the turnkey's daughter, and then patiently submitted to the binding of her hands before she passed with a firm tread down the corridor.

It was now about eleven o'clock. The gate of the Conciergerie was opened, and a movement was seen among the expectant multitude.

The Queen steps out. Her bearing is as proud and majestic as when she walked through the "Galerie des Glaces" at Versailles, but her hands are bound behind her back. The executioner holds the end of the rope, and tries hard not to tighten it.

The Queen is pale, but perfectly composed.

A common cart is in readiness for her, and she cannot repress an exclamation of surprise at the sight of the vehicle. The wheels are coated with mud, and a man in a blouse is there to drive.

The priest seats himself by her side on the rough plank which forms a seat.

"Madame," he says, "this is the moment in which to arm yourself with courage."

"Courage!" replies the Queen quickly. "I have been armed

with courage for a very long time, and it is hardly likely that it will fail me to-day."

The Queen is the cause that 30,000 soldiers are under arms to form a double row from the Conciergerie to the Place de la Révolution. The possibility of an attack from the Austrians, who are barely forty miles from Paris, the chance of a conspiracy in favour of the condemned, has brought out all these troops. It is the last involuntary recognition of her fallen greatness provided for her by Frenchmen.

Paris has been astir since early dawn, when the beating of drums warned the inhabitants to be ready to see her pass. Every corner is occupied, even the branches of the trees, and windows, roofs, and balconies swarm with heads, whilst shouts of "Vive la République" ring through the air.

The cart moves slowly onwards, jolting over the stones. But Marie Antoinette is unable to steady herself with her poor bound hands, and has difficulty in maintaining not merely her dignified bearing, but even her seat.

"These are not soft cushions from Trianon," shrieks the mob scornfully.

Some of the spectators clap their hands. The comedian Gramont abuses his position as an officer of the National Guard as he rises in his stirrups, and points at the condemned with his lance, as if to invite the crowd to insult their former Sovereign.

The Queen's thoughts are far beyond the hootings of the mob, and her eyes glance from one to another without even seeing them. She hears sounds, but they do not touch her heart.

Her former life unfolds itself like a painted scroll before her mind, and she sees as through a veil the distant past that was so dear to her. She thinks of her mother, who some ten years ago was laid with her fathers in that lonely vault, and whom she unfortunately resembles so little. She remembers the time when the people cheered young Marie Antoinette on her brilliant entry into France; she even recalls the fear of future misfortune from the very day of her marriage.

She recollects her loneliness in the midst of the brightness and excitement of the court, her discomfort and isolation in a foreign

land, her mistakes, and the years she spent in a simple vortex of pleasure.

None of her friends are come to bid her farewell, or to accompany her on her last journey. Some are "gone before." Most have cruelly forsaken her, and others will be engulfed in her fall. Not one will lay a flower upon her grave.

She thinks of her husband who has preceded her on this same road, and of her children whom she leaves in prison.

As the procession advances the crowd behaves more suitably. Amazement is the expression on most faces, and many even faint at the sight of their Queen.

It is nearly an hour since the cart left the Conciergerie, and they are close to the fateful Place, which, like the streets, is crowded with spectators.

The cart stops at the gardens of the Tuileries.

Marie Antoinette looks at the palace which she had first entered as Dauphiness, cheered by the eager enthusiasm of the Parisians, and which she had left that 10th of August amid the angry shouts of the same people, who are so cruelly excitable.

God only knows the thoughts that moved her heart at this moment. He alone could grasp the fervent penitent prayers that ascended from her agonized soul when she bent her head under the weight of her reflections.

She became paler still, and heavy tears dropped on to her knees.

The scaffold had been erected, "through a last and cruel irony," at the foot of the Statue of Liberty.

The Queen drew herself up and ascended to the platform with even greater composure than she had shown on leaving the prison, and with dignity equal to the days of her splendour when she had bowed to her subjects assembled at the foot of the throne.

As she was stepping on to the scaffold she inadvertently trod on the executioner's toe, and the man uttered a cry of pain.

The Queen turned and said politely, "Monsieur, I beg your pardon!"

She had lost one of her shoes, singularly small ones, when she stumbled. A man from the throng picked it up and kept it as a relic.

The last look of the prisoner was towards the Tuileries. Then

she knelt and said her last prayer—in the strength of which she faced death.

The executioner trembled and shuddered when he should let the knife fall, but, still, in four minutes all was over; he had accomplished his work, the Queen's head fell; one of the assistants seized it by the hair and exhibited it before the people.

It was a quarter past twelve, October 16th, 1793, when they replied with the shout of "Vive la République."

Marie Antoinette did not hear the Frenchman's cry of joy. She was at rest.

CHAPTER LV.

Count Fersen and the Duc de Polignac—Death of the Princesse Elisabeth—Last Sufferings of Louis XVII.—Is the King's Son Dead in the Temple?—Fate of the Princesse Marie Thérèse—"Chapelle Expiatoire"—Conclusion.

HEAVY depression prevailed in Paris the day that Marie Antoinette was led to the scaffold. Many who did not like her as a Queen were full of compassion for the woman, the victim of the Revolution.

In the Conciergerie the jailers were silent and melancholy. Rosalie, the servant, shed so many tears that the soldiers on duty called her "Mademoiselle Capet." The female prisoners at their daily exercise cast shy glances at the two narrow windows behind which the Queen had lived.

The organs of the Revolution continued their abuse of her memory. Hébert—Père Duchesne—wrote a scurrilous article, beginning:—

"It has been the greatest of Père Duchesne's joys to see Madame Veto's head fall under the knife."

Another paper concluded an article with the words:—

"The tigress is dead; but watch your tyrants."

The *Moniteur*, which in its issue of October 20th had some remarks on the execution, said that Marie Antoinette had not shown the least sign of emotion when the death-warrant was read to her, and that she had mounted the scaffold with courage.

In his paper, *Les Révolutions de Paris*, Prudhomme reluctantly confessed:—

"They looked on calmly as the Queen passed by, and even cheered her; but, on the whole, the people seemed to forget all the evil that this woman had brought upon France, and to look upon her solely in her present condition."

A fortnight after her death (November 1st) the remains of the Queen were buried. The body was laid to rest in a dark corner of the Madeleine Cemetery, not far from the spot where the earthly remains of her husband had been buried, under a layer of lime, nine months previously.

In this same churchyard (1770) had been interred the bodies of numbers of those who had lost their lives in the accident which occurred at the banquet for the people when Louis and Marie Antoinette were married. No cross, monument, or inscription marked the spot where Marie Antoinette of Lorraine and Austria, Queen of France and Navarre, was laid to rest.

The sexton sent in the following account to the President of the revolutionary tribunal:—

"The 25th Vendémiaire. Year II.

Widow Capet:

Coffin . . . 6 livres

Grave and grave-diggers . 25 livres."

What funeral oration could be more touching than these words?

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Two days before the execution of the Queen, Count Axel Fersen was still trying to avert the fate which threatened her.

He received the news of her death on October 20th.

"I can think of nothing but my loss," he wrote in his diary. "It is terrible not to know the details. She was alone in her last moments, without comfort, without a soul to speak to, to whom she might have confided her last wishes. It is dreadful! Oh! these diabolical monsters! No, I shall never be satisfied without revenge!"

Count Fersen's mind had long been unhinged, and after the Queen's death he was seized with incurable melancholy. Gustavus IV. of Sweden loaded him with honours. He was made a senator, a Knight of the Royal Order of the Seraphims, Chancellor of the University of Upsala, and Maréchal of the Kingdom of Sweden.

But as a man he was alone, and the wound of his heart was never healed. Fate willed that his life should end as tragically as that of the beautiful Queen whose friend and knight he had been.

He was murdered in Stockholm June 20th, 1810, during a riot on the occasion of the burial of the Crown Prince Kristian August. The excited populace pulled him from his horse and stabbed him with daggers, beat him to the earth with their cudgels, tore his clothes to shreds, and literally wrenched the hair from his head.

Before he drew his last breath he folded his arms and exclaimed:—

"My God! Thou who callest me to Thyself! I pray for my enemies, whom I forgive!"

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Another of those whom Marie Antoinette had loved, and who had exercised a great influence over her destiny, survived her fifty-three days. The Comtesse de Polignac died in Vienna, December 9th, 1793.

After hovering between Italy and Coblentz, she, her husband, and her children had settled in the imperial city where Marie Antoinette's forefathers had ruled for centuries.

The agitations of her life, her loss of position, fortune, and valued relations had visibly affected her health, and she succumbed to permanent melancholy. She suffered for six months from acute bodily pains, and no physician could discover the nature of her disorder.

Madame de Polignac was afraid of death. It grieved her to leave her husband and children; she knew well that their means were precarious, and her mind gave way under the anxieties of an uncertain future.

Then the fate of the Queen caused her more and more terror, and she trembled every moment lest she should hear that Marie Antoinette had been murdered by the French nation.

Her husband did not dare to tell her of the occurrence of October 16th, but allowed her to believe that her friend had succumbed to sickness while in prison.

The Duchess appeared to believe it. She lost all remembrance of her former life and died unconscious.

When she had closed her weary eyes, the French newspapers recalled her to the people by quoting a remark of Mirabeau:—

"The Assas family received a thousand gold pieces because they saved the State. The Polignac family had a million because they destroyed it."

The Duc de Polignac left for St. Petersburg after the death of his wife, and died there in 1817.

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Nobody had had the courage to tell the Princess Elisabeth and Marie Thérèse that the Queen had been guillotined.

"My aunt and I did not know of mother's death," the daughter wrote in her diary. "We had heard her sentence shouted out by the newsvendors, but we hoped that she had been rescued. I was kept for a year and a half in cruel uncertainty as to her fate. It was not until after that long time, that I learned my unhappy, revered mother was gone."

The only news that reached the princesses in the course of the winter was the execution of the Duc d'Orléans.

The ladies were treated with great harshness. They made their own beds, and cleaned their rooms, the door of which was simply opened wide enough to admit of their food being pushed through.

They did not see a human face nor hear a human voice, and they were kept without lamp or candle. Elisabeth, who was suffering from a sore on her arm, had difficulty in getting a remedy for it. Tison was dismissed from the prison because he had shown them a little kindness.

It added to the sorrow of the princesses that from their rooms they could distinctly hear Simon's rough voice and oaths, and poor little Charles Louis either complaining or singing revolutionary songs.

Marie Thérèse tells us:—

"We heard my little brother singing 'La Carmagnole' and other abominable songs every day with his tormentor."

Elisabeth of France had never taken any part in politics, and the accusations which her enemies had tried to bring against her had hitherto failed. Even the maddest revolutionists had so far refrained from laying hands on the popular sister of Louis XVI.

But in these terrible times even *her* virtue could not save her from the guillotine.

May 9th, 1794, just as the ladies were going to bed their door was opened—the victim was to appear at once before the tribunal.

"You call my brother a tyrant," she said to her accuser, Fouquier Tinville, and to her judges; "if he had been a tyrant, you would not have been sitting there, and I should not have been standing before you!"

As she passed from the hall Fouquier Tinville could not refrain from saying:—

"One must confess that she has not uttered a single complaint."

"What can Elisabeth of France have to complain about?" asked the President, laughing ironically. "Have we not grouped an aristocratic court around her, one worthy of her? When she sees herself surrounded by faithful nobles at the foot of the scaffold, can anything hinder her from imagining herself to be in the salons of Versailles?"

The aristocratic court to which he referred consisted of twenty-three nobles of both sexes, who were condemned to die at the same time as herself.

The victims were led into the judgment hall, where Elisabeth spoke words of comfort and encouragement to each in turn.

"We are not required to abjure our faith like the martyrs of old," she said. "We are only called upon to give up our miserable lives. Let us offer this little sacrifice to God with resignation."

The condemned were marshalled in front of the guillotine, each one firm and courageous.

The first to be called was the Comtesse Croslus d'Amboise, who bowed low before Elisabeth.

"Madame," she said, "if your Royal Highness will deign to embrace me, my greatest wish will be fulfilled."

"Very willingly and most heartily," replied the Princess.

The other ladies approached with the same request, while the gentlemen respectfully kissed her hand.

Several heads had already fallen, when a voice shouted from the crowd:—

"Let them make as many deep curtseys as they like to her; she has all the same got to go to the same point as the Austrian."

Elisabeth heard the expression, and for the first time the certainty of her sister-in-law's death was conveyed to her mind.

"May we meet in heaven!" she murmured.

She was the last to ascend the scaffold. As she was being bound her kerchief fell off and exposed her shoulders, when a silver locket with a picture of the Virgin Mary was discovered hanging from her neck.

The executioner tried to tear the locket away.

"I beg you in your mother's name to cover me," she said.

They were her last words.

Her head fell, but the crowd evinced no pleasure, and there was little response to the cry of "Vive la République."

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The cobbler Simon had resigned his post in the Temple January 19th, 1794. In the course of nine months he had changed the beautiful gifted boy into a poor sickly being, dejected alike in mind and body.

When he left the jailers were to look after the child, and a room which had previously been occupied by Louis XVI.'s valets, and which Simon's wife had used as a work-room, was assigned to him. The door leading into the ante-room was blocked up, but a square hole was cut, and covered with a grating that could be moved up and down, while a little board was used by the turnkey for the child's food, as well as for all impurities that had to be removed from the room.

It was warmed by a pipe from the stove in the ante-room, and only lighted by a small lamp outside the grated opening. No ray of sunlight could penetrate the gloom. Deprived of every interest in life, the heir to the throne of France sat thus for months, without even seeing the hand that brought him his miserable food.

His naturally weak eyes almost lost their sight for want of air and light, and the feeble strength which even Simon's harshness had left in him was rapidly dwindling away. He was tortured with boils, and as a climax to his sufferings his whole body was constantly racked with high fever.

Simon had been a cruel tormentor, but the child longed for him. His wife was a fury, and did not scruple to cuff and jostle the child, but there were times when she had been merciful to him.

It soon became impossible for him to keep his cell clean, or even to grasp his tin plate and mug with his trembling hands. He lay on his unmade bed without the power to move, while he watched the rats and mice devour the food which nobody troubled to bring to his bedside, but which he had just strength enough to fetch from the opening.

Barras visited the Temple July 27th, 1794, and asked to see the little Prince.

The iron grating was raised, when for the first time in six months Charles Louis could look on a human being.

Half delirious with terror he exclaimed, "I say nothing naughty about my jailers."

Barras was silent in the presence of this child, sunk to such depths of utter wretchedness.

At last he said, "I shall complain in strong terms about the filth of this room." He questioned Charles Louis kindly and gently about his health.

September 1st this same year the door was removed, the grated windows were opened, and air and sunshine admitted into the room.

"Charles," said one of the jailers to him, "why don't you eat? you must."

"No," replied the child, "I will die."

A physician was summoned, and he was removed into a better room, where from that day he was carefully nursed; but no human power could save him now.

June 8th, 1795, at three o'clock in the afternoon, he died, aged ten years, two months, and twelve days. He fell asleep with his mother's name on his lips.

Such are the official details. But it is still an open question, after this lapse of a hundred years, whether the child who died in the Temple, and who was interred in a corner of S^{te} Marguerite's churchyard, was really the son of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette.

Lasne, a warder in the Temple, declared in a court of justice that it was he who took the body of Charles Louis Capet to the churchyard and saw him buried.

Two physicians, Pelleton and Dumangin, at the same time

signed a paper in which they declared that they had held a *post-mortem* examination on a body in the Temple.

According to Lasne's statement the King's son must have died the 8th "Prairial" (spring-month), but in the archives of the Convention there is a notification of the 14th Prairial, which orders that search is to be made for Capet's son on every highway in the country. And in the physician's declaration we read, "A body has been handed over to us, *and we are told* that it is that of Charles Louis, Duc de Normandie."

Later on there was a violent dispute between the two doctors on the subject. Pelleton maintained that he believed he had held a *post-mortem* examination on the body of the young King, but Dumangin was not so firmly convinced.

Many people, both in France and in other countries, are of opinion that the jailers allowed themselves to be bribed to effect the escape of the royal child, whom they replaced by some sickly imbecile.

Recent explorations have not tended to weaken this view. In 1894 a skeleton was exhumed for the second time in the churchyard of S^te^ Marguerite in Paris, which in 1846, according to an earlier examination, was believed to be that of the ten-year-old Charles Louis. But on this occasion many scientific men declared that the body could not possibly have been his, but that of a person between the age of eighteen and twenty.

The obscurity which veils the fate of the King's son makes it the more credible that in the course of years numerous pretenders arose to claim the throne of France in his name.

Princesse Marie Thérèse, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, was tormented for years with communications from people who claimed to be her brother. She tells us that on one day she received letters from no fewer than twenty different men, who each declared himself to be the son of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette.

The history of these pretenders does not fall within the scope of this work. One of them, a clockmaker named Naundorff, who died in Holland August 10th, 1845, was unmistakably like the members of the house of Bourbon, and had innumerable zealous adherents in his day.

His widow and children brought an action against the Duchesse d'Angoulême and the children of the Duc de Berry in 1850. They demanded to be legally recognized as the descendants of Louis XVI., but they lost their case. The claim was renewed in 1874, but again without success.

The dust of Louis XVII. has never been discovered, and there is no conclusive proof that he died in his native land. A child's sword, which is preserved in the armoury of the Hotel des Invalides in Paris, is one of the few relics that France possesses of this king without a land, whose life was probably short as measured by time, though undoubtedly long by suffering.

It bears the following inscription: "This sword belonged to the son of Louis XVI. He was a king without a crown, and died without a grave. Fate decreed that he should own a sword; he was the descendant of mighty kings, but he never fought, except against Simon, whom he disarmed by patience."

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Princess Marie Thérèse was the only one in the Temple who was unaware that a body was removed, and that it was said to be that of her brother. And she also knew nothing about the death of the Princess Elisabeth.

After the departure of her aunt, she spent five months in solitude, a prey to sorrow and bitter thoughts. She darned her stockings, patched her shoes, and read Elisabeth's books of devotion from beginning to end, again and again.

Her aunt had accustomed her to be independent of companionship, and also to be careful of every detail affecting her health. She had enjoined her to throw water on the floor every day in order to purify the air of the room, and to walk briskly up and down for an hour to ensure herself regular daily exercise.

In September, 1795, her former gouvernante, Madame de Tourzel, obtained permission to visit the Princess. She asked her how it was that with her acute susceptibilities, she had been able to bear so many misfortunes.

"I should have been crushed to the earth without my faith in God," answered Marie Thérèse.

She added that she had been so weary of utter loneliness that

she had often said to herself, "If they were to bring a person to share my room—not a perfect monster—I am sure I could not help being fond of her."

A new and better condition of things was meantime succeeding to the Reign of Terror in France, and it was resolved to send the King's daughter to Vienna in exchange for Lafayette, Lameth, and several other prisoners of war who had fallen into the hands of the Austrians.

Exile did not seem much preferable to imprisonment.

"I should prefer the tiniest home in France to the demonstrations which are sure to await such an unfortunate Princess as I am," she said.

As she passed the frontier she looked back yet once again. Devotion to the land of her famous ancestors was mixed with bitter memories, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I leave France with regret," she said; "I can never forget that it is my native land."

She arrived in Vienna on January 9th, 1796—three years after the execution of her father.

Her countenance, which had borne an expression reflecting the good nature of Louis XVI. and the lively temperament of her mother, was now cruelly marked by pain. A smile was never to be seen on her lips. She had a funeral urn placed in her room, covered with pictures of death, and in front of this she spent the greater part of the day.

She remained in the Austrian capital for three years and a half, but she felt neither free nor happy. Then she obtained permission to visit her uncle, the Comte de Provence, and in June, 1799, she married her cousin, the Duc d'Angoulême, according to the wish of the parents from their childhood.

The surviving Bourbons, who had found a refuge in Mittau, were driven away from there in January, 1801, by the Emperor Paul. They led a roving life for some years, and finally found a temporary home in England.

The year 1814 brought a ray of light into the existence of Marie Thérèse, which had been so sorrowful and gloomy. On April 24th she landed at Calais with Louis XVIII., and entered Paris the 3rd of May by the side of her uncle. Their

carriage was drawn by eight white horses. The streets were strewn with flowers, and the houses hung with garlands, while the excitement and enthusiasm were beyond description.

When the daughter of the martyred sovereigns entered the ill-omened palace, which she had not seen since the 10th of August, 1792, she was welcomed by two hundred ladies dressed in white and carrying white lilies.

They knelt before her and exclaimed, "Daughter of Louis XVI.! Give us your blessing!"

The excitement was too much for her, and she fainted away.

Napoleon's escape from Elba, and his reign of a hundred days, again drove Marie Thérèse and the other Bourbons into exile.

When the Duchesse d'Angoulême made her second entry into Paris her illusions had disappeared.

February 13th, 1820, saw her by the death-bed of her brother-in-law, the Duc de Berry.

"Be brave, brother," she said to him; "but if God calls you to Himself, tell my father that he must pray for France and for us."

The Revolution of 1830 drove her for the third time into exile, from which death alone was to release her.

Marie Thérèse was childless. She lost her husband June 1st, 1844. As a widow she remained with the Comte de Chambord, who loved her more than his own mother. She died at Frohsdorff, October 18th, 1851, at the age of nearly seventy-three—fifty-five years and two days after the execution of her mother. Her last wish had been to be laid to rest in France, but it was not to be fulfilled. She lies buried in the Franciscan chapel at Goritz, by the side of her husband and her father-in-law and uncle, Charles X.

The following is engraved on the stone which covers her dust:—

"O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite, et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus!"

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When the Bourbons returned to France, the churchyard in which Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette had been laid to rest was gone. But a faithful Royalist, Desclozeaux, had bought a spot to receive the last remains of the King and Queen.

It was in a small garden in the Rue d'Anjou that the Chancellor was invited to be present at the exhumation of the bodies, January 18th, 1815.

After digging for a whole day the fragments of Marie Antoinette's coffin came to light. Human bones, a few rags, two garters, and the Queen's head were also found. A nobleman who was present thought he could discern an expression round the mouth which recalled the Queen's smile.

Some remains of the King were discovered the following day. They were placed all together in two zinc coffins, which on the 23rd were conveyed with solemn religious ceremonies to the royal vault at St. Denis.

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Versailles and Trianon are still relics of the brilliant days of Louis and Marie Antoinette. The bedroom is shown which the Queen occupied for nineteen years in Versailles, where all her children saw the light, and from whence she had to fly, half dressed, that memorable 6th of October.

And in little Trianon many trifles have been piously preserved as souvenirs of the unhappy Queen who loved the place so dearly.

The Tuileries are burnt down. There is literally not one stone left upon another of the hall in which the King and Queen of the French were condemned to death, or of the Temple which was their prison.

The Place de la Révolution is the Place de la Concorde, and two large fountains mark the spot where the guillotine stood.

"But the fountains of all the world," says a French author, "would not suffice to wash away the blood which has been shed on this spot."

Of all the buildings that witnessed the heaviest sorrow of Marie Antoinette, the Conciergerie is the only one that exists after the lapse of a hundred years. The pious sayings which the Queen scratched with a pin on the walls of her cell have disappeared under repeated coats of whitewash, but the picture of Christ, which still hangs there, is thought to be the same before which she said her daily prayers.

Louis XVIII. erected a "Chapelle Expiatoire" on the spot

where the bodies of the King and Queen were found. Revolution has followed revolution, a second Empire succeeded to kingly rule, but so far, this Chapelle has peacefully survived the terrible changes and disturbances of the capital.

Every 16th of October it is filled from early morning with men and women in mourning. All the old nobility of Paris are present, and bishops chant masses for the dead. Wreaths are laid at the foot of the marble group, which represents Marie Antoinette supported by religion, on the pedestal of which are engraved words from her last letter to the Princess Elisabeth.

Opinions concerning the youngest daughter of Maria Theresa have varied with the times. Immediately after her death, under the vivid impression of her tragedy, both friend and foe were moved to judge her with leniency.

After the restoration of order in France, judgment on her became more severe, and the freshly-kindled interest in her dwindled away, while not a few of the participators in the Revolution tried to minimise their own outbreaks at the cost of the imperial daughter of Austria. Old libels against her were brought to light, and old accusations; certainly with less acrimony than before, though not less eagerly.

When the Bourbons came into power for a short time, opinion veered again, and numbers of memorials and apologies in defence of the maligned Queen were then published.

Her friends have not been less prejudiced in her favour than her detractors in their slander. Marie Antoinette was far too partial in her friendships, and exposed herself in this way to the righteous censure of the nation. Her love of amusement, her extravagance, her haughtiness were all calculated to encourage the hatred which had not been aroused without reason.

And even after the enquiries of modern times, one dare not absolutely espouse her cause; although, on the other hand, we cannot refrain from recognizing that her slanderers, in spite of their efforts, have never done more than repeat the imprudent acts of her youth, and that posterity has exonerated her from the most serious of the accusations brought against her by her enemies of contemporary times.

Who can think of the last year of her life without pity, or deny

that whatever her offences may have been she was far too cruelly punished! Few of the worst criminals have in any degree undergone what Marie Antoinette of Lorraine and Austria, reigning Queen of France and Navarre, had to endure. Among the least of her sorrows was the fear of a violent death, which probably never left her for a day between October 5th, 1789, and October 16th, 1793.

Bitter to her proud and domineering nature were the coarse invectives hurled against her as a woman, and one who had been used to even servile obsequiousness.

And yet the innumerable insults and degradations to which she was exposed during the Revolution were comparatively slight in contrast with the separation from her husband, with the inhuman exhibition of the head of the Princesse de Lamballe, with the concerted plan of corruption to which her dearest child was subjected, and with her own death on the scaffold.

THE END

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